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THE WILL

A NOVEL

BY

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FROM THE GERMAN

BY

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THE WILL.

CHAPTER I.

WALKING along the lonely High-street which cuts across the market-place of Halldorf, dividing it into two unequal parts, behold, in the early dawn, a singular apparition — a man of about thirty, lean and pale, with a curiously narrow face. A shabby silk-hat covers his thin hair, his legs are encased in tightly-fitting cloth gaiters and his body is wrapped in the queerest coat that ever mortal wore. Karl Theodor Heinzius, duly licensed as a town schoolmaster, inherited this holiday garment from an uncle who was some inches taller and at least twice as stout; Heinzius, thrifty and indifferent to his appearance, had been content to move the buttons some inches back with his own hands, and to cut the flowing skirts shorter with the large scissors that lay on his desk; and the coat thus modified he was now wearing for the seventh year, not merely as a gala costume on

festive occasions, but also as his working-dress and official garb.

It was early in September, and thus the middle of the long vacation; the schoolmaster's pace was brisker than it would have been during the school-months, and the stick in his hand and the satchel slung across his shoulder with "Bon voyage" on the flap, argued that he was setting out on some expedition into the country. He paused in front of a house looking on to the market-place and giving his hatchet-face as broad and genial an expression as it was capable of assuming, he tapped at a half-open window on the ground-floor.

"Good-morning!" he called into the little room. "Otto are you ready?"

"Good-morning, Herr Heinzius," answered a woman's voice. "Will you not walk in and sit down? I have not done packing for Herr Wellner, and he has only just sat down to breakfast."

The speaker was Dame Ursula, the worthy widow of the late respected toll-clerk Zacharias; she had come to the window with the dignity becoming her bulky circumference, while Otto Wellner, her lodger during the last year and a half, called out from the table where he was breakfasting:

"Come in, come in; we have time enough and to spare."

"Oh! yes, plenty," said the schoolmaster, and he went in.

"Sit down, Theodor," said the other, a man of four and twenty, whose handsome young face was full of eagerness and excitement. "Who knows how many years I may wander in the land before that mysterious abstraction we call Fate throws us together again for a comfortable hour!"

"Well, you are not going to the other side of the world," said the schoolmaster. "Seven miles! What are seven miles when once you know the road? — though to be sure travelling costs a fortune, and if you do not come here. . ."

"There you go again! Do you know, Heinzius, that your mismanagement often makes me quite cross. A schoolmaster is not a Croesus, but still— if you did not spend every penny on books and instruments, and if you had not wasted the precious hours which you really might have put to far greater profit — yes, I say wasted them. . ."

"Indeed, it is quite true, Herr Heinzius," said the portly widow bringing him a cup. "Herr Otto's father was often quite angry because you— because. . ."

"Well, and what then," exclaimed Heinzius defiantly. "Is it a crime to have given the boy a little of what I possess myself and without being any the poorer myself? Teaching is my hobby, so to speak. . ."

"No doubt — but Herr Otto himself. . ."

"Says just what his father said before him," added Heinzius. "I tell you what my good woman; do you give your mind to your coffee — which is first-rate, by the way—and let me alone with your lecturing. Did Otto force himself on me let me ask? Or was it I who invited him to come to me? It was for my own pleasure, my worthy woman, for my own particular satisfaction, *deliciae meae;* and an honest man does not take payment for that."

"A queer theory!" said Otto. "But though you are so obstinate. . ."

"Now you are beginning," muttered Heinzius.

Otto slapped him on the shoulder.

"I know, you will take no thanks, so I am going to try ingratitude. Where do you find it written that you have done me a service that was really worth doing? Ha — that is a startling suggestion! But there is something in it nevertheless. Without the learning that you have in-

fused into my brain I should probably be to this day just what I was at first: your subordinate and colleague as a teacher, a humble "well-trained young man" — as the parson says, with no kind of ambition, looking up with reverence to my worthy but very limited superiors. — And it was you who crammed my head with new ideas and dreams — with the absurd notion that I was an artist, because I can draw better than the generality of men. And for three years I believed you, till I got a lesson; a lesson that still hurts, my dear Heinzius! Then I was an ardent Darwinist! That fairly carried me to the clouds! And now Darwinism has brought me into trouble. When the gentlemen at Gernsheim heard of that it was all up with the long-hoped-for appointment—and so I must be off with the small remains of my pocket-money, and take my chance of what may turn up."

"Villain!" exclaimed Heinzius. "By Heaven! I might take it to heart, only I know you did not always speak so. Well, you might have been a schoolmaster no doubt, to this hour — but what then? I do not refer merely to the miserable pay, though that, too, weighs in the scale. For me it is, of course, amply sufficient, — but you, my dear boy, are made of different stuff. Still, irrespective

of that, what business has an eagle in a sparrow's nest? No, no; you must go — take your chance for all I care, but go you must."

"Yes, you are right!" replied the younger man. "I cannot do with this dreary daily grind. I feel that I cannot rest — that I must go, that I need a wider life and higher ends. It was only for my father's sake, and then for yours, that I could bear this narrow and cloudless existence — now, I know that I can endure it no longer. I am off and away, Heinzius — I must have gone, even if it had not proved necessary. I will find a place in the world, a position that I can fill in society— some comfort for my discontented soul. I will forget all I have suffered and seek a new and busy life—excitement, bustle, madness, call it what you will. . ."

"So you think," replied the schoolmaster. "But I know you better. Learning, Science — nay at length perhaps Art which you have so wilfully forsworn — will at length prevail over the recklessness of youth. You are not one of those whose heads can be turned by the vanities of the world; you will always know and remember where to find true happiness and pure joys; not in superficial novelty, but in your own soul."

He had risen from his seat and set his hat,

brushed to baldness, on his head with a determined air; then he took his iron-shod staff from the corner. He looked quite enterprising as he stood by Otto, waiting while the widow adjusted the straps of a tightly-packed knapsack to the shoulders of her departing lodger.

"Now," said Otto, taking up his straw hat.

"Now," repeated Heinzius: "Away — to the land flowing with milk and honey!" He put a good face on the matter, but it was clear nevertheless that he felt the parting keenly. Otto's departure for the capital deprived him of his greatest friend; for an intimacy had gradually grown up between the master and pupil which, within the last year, had developed into cordial affection.

The ill-matched pair walked arm in arm through the town and out of the gate. The schoolmaster intended to accompany the young traveller as far as Gernsheim, the chief town within reach. As his feelings by degrees became too much for him he flourished his stick more vigorously, like a student practising cut and thrust at an imaginary foe. This served as a lightning conductor for his agitated spirits. For some minutes neither of them spoke; each had enough to think of indeed, for Otto was fully alive to the gravity of the occasion.

"What a lovely day!" said the schoolmaster at length, controlling his voice with an effort. "The sky is as blue and the woods are as thick and green as though in all time there were no such thing as autumn!" He threw back his head and inhaled the fresh air with a deep breath; a tinge of color reddened his thin cheeks and his eyes seemed brighter and larger than usual.

"I envy you?" sighed Otto.

"What for?"

"For your gift of feeling happy; for your sunny and God-sent capacity for raving."

"As if you yourself were not equally enraptured by all the enchanting legends that surround us; as if you were incapable of raving!"

"Perhaps — but still with a difference. I look round on the world as a man who admires a glorious picture. You view as a prince might contemplate a limitless dominion, saying to himself: 'And all this is mine!'"

And so talking they went on their way, till, after walking at a good pace for about an hour, Heinzius stopped for a moment and drew his hand out of his companion's arm. The road was up-hill, and walking and talking had put the frail little man quite out of breath; he coughed a little, unbuttoned his coat, and then, passing his hand over

his forehead, he said: "We have run like the coopers—*si verbo licet uti vulgari.* Let us sit down a minute on the bridge yonder."

A few paces before them the road led across a half-empty brook; they sat down on the stone parapet of the little bridge.

"Thank God for that!" muttered Heinzius. Wellner looked in his face.

"You used to be a hardy mountaineer," he said as he laid aside his knapsack; "but seriously, you look quite knocked up. Here, try this."

He had opened the knapsack and handed a straw-covered flask to his comrade who drank.

"Good!" he said, wiping his mouth. "I do not know what had taken me by the throat." He returned the flask to Otto who tried to push it back into its place; but his worthy dame had taken such careful advantage of every inch of space to pack in half-a-hundred indispensable things, that this was a difficult matter; the schoolmaster, anxious to help, made it impossible, and there was nothing for it but to take everything out and pack it all over again.

Heinzius watched the proceeding with eager interest; so many things were displayed to his gaze—objects of mere luxury from his philosophical point of view, though most men would

have regarded them as indispensable to a decent toilet and a very moderate degree of personal comfort.

"Hey! and what is this?" he suddenly asked, pointing to a large thin packet wrapped in whitey-brown paper.

"That?" repeated Otto. "Oh! all sorts of things. . ."

"An exact statement I must say! Look here, youngster — what is wrong with you? You are quite put out of countenance — like a girl caught by her father in a clandestine correspondence."

"You really think . . . ?"

"Certainly, I think — I only hope that you never would, without saying a word about it — I tell you frankly, it would hurt me deeply! You ought to have no secrets from me."

Otto looked up; the schoolmaster's eyes twinkled with emotion and his ugly, meagre face was full of kindness and affection. Yes, he would, he must, now, at the eleventh hour, tell his faithful old friend a secret which he had hitherto kept as though it were some fatal word which, uttered before the time, might entail death. But Heinzius might help him to solve the mystery.

Glancing cautiously up and down the road to see whether any uninvited third person were likely

to disturb them, he untied the string which fastened the packet.

"You must forgive me," he said gravely, "for never having spoken of the matter till now. I have kept it from you simply and only because my father enjoined such absolute secrecy. But I have always said to myself that you, at any rate, my best friend, must be told of it sooner or later; and indeed, your keen judgment may perhaps throw some light on what is certainly a most strange and mysterious affair. Even a guess, if it affords a clue, will be thankfully received."

He had unfolded the wrapper on the coping of the wall, setting the knapsack on it to keep it steady; he now opened a grey cardboard case, out of which he took a large letter, sealed with five seals.

"You see this," he said. "Inside this envelope lies the answer to a riddle which has cost me many hours of cogitation and anxious deliberation."

"But why weary your brain when you might break the seals?"

"Because that is exactly what I may not do. Look at this—written and signed by myself on the margin of the wrapper. Read it — word for word; that will save all further explanations."

The schoolmaster, lost in bewilderment, took up the packet. The note on the envelope was as follows:

"When my father, Gottfried Georg Franz Wellner, bookbinder of Halldorf, gave me this packet, sealed with five seals, and had assured me, before God and on his solemn word, that it contained nothing but some letters, and nothing relating either to money or estate, I, Otto Wellner, his son, solemnly swore and vowed to take the utmost care of this, the said packet, and never to open it until, in spite of my best and most earnest efforts, I found myself in absolute want, or else should be constantly unfortunate in my business or profession; and in the latter contingency not to open it till I had completed my twenty-sixth year. And in the event of such need never overtaking me, to leave this, the said packet intact. Any infringement of this solemn promise I am to regard not merely as a dishonorable breach of faith, but as a crime which will bring disgrace on my father's memory. I write this with my own hand and with a full understanding of the sacredness of a solemn promise.

"OTTO WELLNER."

The schoolmaster shook his head as he returned the mysterious Will to his friend.

"It is strange!" he said a little stiffly. "And this, you say, has cost you weeks of anxiety and unrest?"

"This — and my father's proceedings about it altogether. I shall never forget it so long as I live. He was ill, as you know, for some months; but I had no suspicion that the end was near. I trusted in the finer season, and my own youthful vigor made death seem an impossibility — and when one day I went into his room and he wearily beckoned me to him and clasped me in his arms as if he were taking leave of me forever—I knew then."

"He spoke to me quite calmly of his approaching end, as a man who had long been ready for the worst. Every word he spoke went to my heart; an awful weight seemed to crush my breast; I fell at his feet and threw my arms round his knees, and I longed to shriek and cry but I felt paralyzed, body and soul. And then, in the midst of that terrible struggle, to go through that solemn and mysterious business — the impression was awful, never-to-be-forgotten!"

He wrapped the packet up in its covers; the reminiscence had made him tremulous. The image of his father, whom he had devotedly loved, rose before him undimmed by the lapse of years, reviving a sorrow which had been lived

down but never killed and buried. The memory of that father's calm, wise and beneficent life filled him with regrets beyond words. Eccentric — an oddity — that was what the foolish outside world had called him, never understanding the man that lived within that shell of singularity; but now, better than ever, Otto knew how far superior that simple honest soul had been to the worldly-wise who had laughed at him; there was a sort of envy in his admiration of the dead, who had borne his suffering as a visitation of God, who had never known what it was to crave for the unattainable, who had possessed the great panacea against all grief and disappointment: Patience and self-denial.

The schoolmaster sat in silence on the parapet of the bridge, drawing outlines in the dust with the ferule of his stick; presently he sprang up.

"I tell you what!" he exclaimed slapping his friend Otto on the shoulder: "If I were you I would put aside all serious consideration of the matter till further notice, just as you have put by the letter in the knapsack. When I get home again I will try if I can make anything of the riddle. But for the present forget it all. Let us make the most of our walk through this lovely valley as if it were for the last time — and so it is for the last time, at any rate for the present!"

"You are right," replied Otto. "Question me, and turn it over in your mind — but not now. On we go!"

They set out again, but more slowly than before, and as they reached Gernsheim the church clock of St. Sophia's struck half-past twelve.

CHAPTER II.

Otto Wellner and Karl Theodor Heinzius went to the "Golden Anchor" in a humble street near the market-place. Of the seven inns of Gernsheim the "Golden Anchor" was the least pretentious. When they had brushed and washed off a little of the dust of the high-road they went into the inn parlor, where a tall, fair waiting-maid was just bringing in the soup. Ten or twelve guests were seated at the table — commercial travellers, countrymen in the old Franconian costume, a tall, lank student, and a few others less easy to identify.

Heinzius, who could not squeeze out ninety pfennige for the dinner, was at first inclined to go out at once to the house of the post-mistress, who was his aunt by marriage, but Otto, with the

proud wealth of youth, made it a pleasure to invite his former master to be his guest, and Heinzius gladly accepted. As they took their seats—the schoolmaster in his excitement nearly forgetting to take off his hat—the silent circle looked up; some of them, especially a square-built, stunted individual who sat with his elbows far on the table, seemed to scent amusement, and as they inspected the closely-buttoned frock-coat and the grotesque embarrassment of the wearer they were evidently on the verge of a titter. The square-built fellow twisted his straw-colored moustache, nudged his neighbor—a hungry-looking commercial traveller who was giving his whole mind to spooning up his soup—and cleared his throat, twinkling his eyes with malicious significance. Otto felt the hot blood mount in his cheeks. He himself was not blind to the eccentricity of his companion's appearance but he instinctively denied every other man's right to see anything ridiculous in the friend he honored and loved—especially did he rebel against it in that hawk-nosed rascal at the head of the table. He turned so as to face him and fixed a piercing eye on the coarse, brutal countenance; the man flinched a little, like a boy caught in mischief, but instantly his expression changed and he returned the stare with threatening defiance. He

threw himself back at full length in his chair, shrugged his shoulders, muttered something between his teeth, of which Otto caught only a word or two, and finally spit under the table with ostentatious vehemence; but as nothing further came of it and the merriment of the rest of the party was altogether damped Otto took no notice of his demonstrations.

Heinzius, who had observed nothing of all this, fell to his dinner with an appetite that did him credit, disposing of the thin soup with wonderful rapidity; then, crossing his arms over his breast, he sat lost in contemplation of the waiting-maid who was clearing away the soup-plates, beginning with Otto's enemy at the top of the table. And in fact the *kellnerin* — Martha she was called — was an uncommonly pretty creature. Tall and slight, with a delicate oval face and a mass of light hair, the simple reticence of her demeanor was curiously out of place in such company. She herself seemed to be conscious of this, for her long lashes drooped on her cheeks with a look of quiet resignation as she went gravely and noiselessly about her business. The schoolmaster watched her graceful movements and her steady and modest attention to her work with evident admiration. His wide mouth — nothing else was

wide in his pinched thin face—spread to a blissful smile and his eyes sparkled as they had before that morning in gazing at the dewy autumn landscape.

"Heinzius!" whispered Otto, perceiving that his companion's platonic enchantment was attracting attention, while the hostile stranger had turned to his neighbor saying:

"I say, Arthur, what do you think of that? We shall see the scarecrow next — out there with a high-hat — casting sheep's eyes at pretty Martha!"

He pointed out of window to a plot of beans in the inn-garden, where they could see a scarecrow made of a pole about as tall as a man with a cross-lath to represent arms. The top of this artless contrivance was crowned with a tall hat set on askew, and but little inferior in the whole to the schoolmaster's head-gear. The remark was greeted by a loud laugh at that end of the table, and the innocent butt looked first at the scarecrow and then at his friend who changed color rapidly from white to red and from red to white again. Otto poured out a glass of wine with a trembling hand, drank a few drops and then said to the insolent ruffian.

"You seem remarkably merry; but you will

allow me to observe that your merriment irritates me. You will have the goodness to postpone it till after dinner."

"What next?" retorted the square-built man. "We are all equal here!"

"A pretty thing indeed!" the traveller threw in.

"Please God a man may laugh if he has a mind to," said a third, thumping the table with his fist.

Heinzius meanwhile, knowing his friend's irascible nature, had kneaded his feet vigorously under the table, whispering to him in imploring accents: "*Acquam memento!*" or "*Fac ut taccas!*" At length, whether his warnings had their effect, or whether Otto thought it beneath his dignity to have a regular quarrel with his ruffianly foe, the young man controlled himself so far as to answer politely:

"Do not misunderstand me pray. Laugh as much as you like, but do not outrage the rights which I also have a claim to."

His calm, but determined tone did not fail of its effect; the leader of the jest muttered something inaudible under his moustache, and began to devour his meat with vulgar greediness.

When dinner was over Otto and the school-

master went to their room; on the stairs the innkeeper came up to them, respectfully begging their pardon for the allusions made to the scarecrow.

"That fellow Peltzer is always in mischief," he said with much annoyance. "I should have forbidden him to show his face here long ago, but he is an ugly customer to have a quarrel with. When once he takes a spite against a fellow he does not care what he does."

"Peltzer is the ugly brute's name then?"

"Ephraim Peltzer," repeated the host. "He works in the tobacco factory — Hesselt & Co. — and is a first-rate workman they say, who can do anything he has a mind to. He earns a pretty penny, too,—I do not know what wages he gets, but it must be something more than the common run, he has more than he knows what to do with. He has not his match for impudence and he is well educated, too—well I have said enough about him."

"Educated!" said the schoolmaster. "In what way?"

"Well they think a good deal of him here among his own set, and if there is anything going forward he is at the bottom of it; then he has learnt many things that give him an advantage.

He was three years in a lawyer's office and writes as fast and as glib as a schoolmaster, and he has picked up all sorts of dodges; he knows how to summons a man that won't pay up, and little things of that kind. In short, all I can say is that I hope you will not take it ill in me. . ."

Otto reassured him on that point and the friends went up-stairs. Otto opened the bedroom window and threw himself on the bed, while Heinzius sat down on the only chair.

"I say," Otto presently began, "it might really have been very awkward. What possessed you to sit staring in blank rapture at that girl? You — a schoolmaster — four and thirty — and to make such eyes at her. . ."

Heinzius bit his lip.

"You are right," he said in a low voice, "it was rash. I know how ready the profane are to misinterpret that kind of admiration."

"Did you really think the girl so wonderfully attractive!"

"Beyond all words! She has the cheek and chin of the Venus of Cnidus — and what lovely hair! the broad waves of the Ludovisi Juno!"

Otto raised his head.

"Heinzius!" he exclaimed, "I really believe you have fallen in love in your old age!"

"I? What are you thinking of? Do you know what it means to be in love?"

"Well," laughed Otto, "the definition certainly formed no part of our studies, but still I fancy. . ."

"You know nothing about it," his friend declared. "To be in love with a girl is to thrill in every fibre of your heart with the longing to make her your own, to kiss her, to marry her. And do you really believe that I, Karl Theodor Heinzius. . . It is ridiculous, preposterous!"

There was a pause. Heinzius had taken his chair to the window; Otto, who was sleepy after his long walk and hearty dinner, shut his eyes, and when, presently, the schoolmaster again spoke he only stammered a vague reply. His thoughts faded into dreams and he was asleep.

An hour and a half later he was roused by the neighing and trampling of horses, and springing up he looked at his watch. Heinzius had meanwhile stretched himself on the bed and seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Wellner rose very quietly in order not to disturb him and went to the window. Down in the courtyard he saw a well-dressed man who sprang lightly from his saddle and after patting his horse — a handsome black beast — on the shoulder, gave some brief orders to the waiter who went out to meet him. Then,

raising his hat, he wiped his brow with a bordered handkerchief which he then stuck knowingly in the left-hand breast pocket of his well-fitting frock coat, and went into the house, slashing the dust off his boots with his riding-whip. Otto had watched all the proceedings of this new-comer — a man of about five and twenty — with eager interest. He bore every indication of being rich and a man of birth and good breeding; how, then, came he to put up at this low tavern, cheek-by-jowl, so to speak, with the commercial traveller and the ruffianly Peltzer? The contrast was so striking that it was quite clear that something out of the common must lie at the bottom of the matter.

Pondering on these things Otto turned away from the window and in a few minutes his travelling-companion woke.

"That was a strange dream!" he said pulling himself up. "I saw you on horseback riding in triumph along the Via Sacra at Rome. You were in armor like a conqueror, and the women and girls flung garlands of laurel at your feet. — Well, *habeat sibi.* Back to real life once more! I think that if we were to explore the streets of Gernsheim, it would be an edifying way of filling up the afternoon till supper-time."

"By all means!" said Otto.

Heinzius took out of the travelling-bag with *Bon voyage* on it, a brush and gave his hat an affectionate and beautifying touch. Then they went down-stairs.

"To the left, my friend!" cried Heinzius, as Otto turned to the right. Otto, however, thought he remembered exactly that the stairs leading to the street went off to the right; he was mistaken: the door they opened led into the garden.

I told you so," said the schoolmaster. "I knew it — topography was always my strong point. However, as we are here — we can walk through the town presently. I love a kitchen-garden with its box-hedged paths and fruit-trees and raspberry-bushes; it reminds me of my childhood."

They walked on down the middle path; the September sun poured a flood of warm light on the little plot of ground that was full of herbs and vegetables — beans, turnips, cabbages, and potatoes; in the narrow borders between the raspberry and currant-bushes bloomed asters and monthly roses, and ripe fruit weighed down the apple and pear-trees, while the faint hum of bees filled the air and grasshoppers chirped plaintively in the grass-plot. Presently they came to a path crossing the one they were in, and turned off towards

a little summer-house, overgrown with wild vine and standing in the middle of a circular plot.

Heinzius pressed his companion's arm significantly; on a wooden bench outside the summer-house, under the shade of a patriarchal pear-tree, sat the fair-haired Martha, bending over a sieve in her lap; by her side was a casket full of beans. In front of her, leaning against an espalier, stood the tall horseman whose arrival Otto Wellner had watched just now.

The two friends had got so far unperceived, for they had been walking on the grass and their footsteps were noiseless.

"Indeed!" muttered Otto.—"Well, I might have guessed it!"

Martha stooped lower and lower over her task and her cheeks glowed crimson. The stranger must have said something very interesting; indeed, his demeanor betrayed it, for he nodded several times with more energy than became his attitude of elegant nonchalance. Then he apparently pitched his discourse in a different key; with his hand against the post he gracefully lifted his right foot behind his left and coquetted with his whip on the gravel. In short, there could be no doubt that the gentleman was courting the fair Martha, and with as much display of courtesy

as he might have used in a splendid drawing-room, in addressing the daughter of a millionaire or a lady of high degree. He struck his boot smartly with his whip as if to emphasize some insinuating argument, and Martha looked up. — She at once saw the schoolmaster and his comrade.

A deeper dye mounted to her face and she faintly exclaimed: "Oh!", her knife slipped to the ground and she stooped again, in utter confusion, over the sieve full of cut beans. The cavalier looked round and a cloud fell on his handsome brow; the interruption, it was evident, was from his point of view most unlucky, and the nervous irritation with which he twisted his moustache was distinctly defiant. If Heinzius had been alone it is not improbable that the excited hero might have risked a demonstration and an effective little scene, for the schoolmaster's unconcealed embarrassment promised an easy triumph and rout of the intruder; but, as it was, he subdued the expression of his annoyance, contenting himself with hastily leaving Martha to recover herself and coming forward, just touching his hat, to ask the intruders "whom they were seeking?"

A strange sensation came over Wellner as the young man approached. He would not perhaps

have owned it, even to himself, but the stranger's whole appearance — the faultless fit of his riding-coat, the brilliant neatness of his get-up, the perfect ease and confidence of his manner, impressed him greatly. For the first time in his experience it occurred to him that the lame tailor at Halldorf, who had just made his grey and brown-checked summer-suit, was not so finished an artist as he proclaimed himself. Why, in all Halldorf there was not a man half so well dressed as this young fellow in his riding-coat; and what was strange about it was that his clothes had not the slightest appearance of smartness, or Sunday-best. Everything he had on was perfectly simple and worn as a matter of course, from the silver-mounted whip to the buckskin glove which fitted his hand as if it had been moulded on it. Otto thought of a pair of gloves that Mrs. Ursula Zacharias, the toll-gate keeper's widow, had given him on his last birthday; they were in his knapsack, carefully wrapped in paper with some other treasures, but he could see them now with the ugly wrinkles they had taken, and those wrinkles he suddenly felt to be irredeemably vulgar.

His honest shame at feeling thus and his effort to get the better of it roused a spirit of opposition in him; he imitated the young man's gesture,

raising his hat a little, and asked, for lack of anything better to say:

"And may I ask whom I have the honor of addressing?"

"My name is Hellwald, Benno Hellwald," said the young man.

"And mine is Wellner, Otto Wellner."

Heinzius now also made his bow and with the greatest politeness announced his name and attributes. Encouraged by the schoolmaster's extreme deference the horseman repeated his former enquiry.

"Perhaps," he added with a suspicion of irony, "I may be able to save you any further exploration of the place."

The haughty politeness with which the words were uttered added to the irritation of Wellner's temper.

"You are too kind," he said with a similar inflection, "but to explore the place was precisely our intention."

Hellwald colored.

"Pray do so," he said sarcastically. "I have no wish to interfere with your enjoyment. I may however, be allowed to express a hope that for the future you will not creep quite so noiselessly behind the bushes. This young lady was dreadfully

startled — indeed, it is not pleasant to be so suddenly. . ."

"I do not understand you," interrupted Otto sharply, for Hellwald's tone was rather that of a master lecturing his pupils. "All I gather from your words is that you are very indignant at the interruption to your—conversation. That is your affair and you must settle it with Chance that brought us this way. If you think you can use me as a conductor for your ill-humor I may as well warn you that I am a very bad one."

The young gentleman twitched his whip in a way that seemed to hint that he would like to answer his antagonist with that; but Otto looked him in the face with such cool contempt and stood so firm and defiant that Benno Hellwald preferred to let the movement pass as an involuntary gesture and turn his back on Wellner.

"*Eamus!*" whispered Heinzius, half in command and half in entreaty, and seeing Otto hesitate he gently grasped his arm. "*Compesce undas!* Smooth down the waves of your wrath," he said as Otto gave way. "You have paid him out."

"Let it drop," said Otto. "Well, my journey has begun well certainly — first that brute at dinner — and now . . . Come away."

They went back into the house; in the doorway they found the stable-lad who had taken charge of Benno Hellwald's horse. He was sitting in the sunshine, devouring a hunch of bread and butter; on the ground, close at hand, was a jug of beer.

"Is it good?" said Heinzius.

"It might be worse," retorted the man.

"Might be worse! What do you mean?"

"It is only a way of speaking. I picked it up from Herr Peltzer."

"I do not understand."

"Well, you know — but no, you are strangers in these parts — Peltzer is a great socialist and democrat, and since Herr Meynert made his first speech here I have joined their party."

"Meynert?" said Otto, while the man munched on with evident satisfaction. "Is that the notorious speaker on social questions?"

"I suppose so; for Peltzer always calls him the great Meynert. And he is a sharp one, that no one can deny. Twice already he has had to pay dearly for his pranks, but he will not give in. You should hear him explain — as clear as day he makes it — how nothing is as it should be in this wretched world, and how different it would be if he only got a chance of setting things to rights.—

I myself, now, I am not, as you may say, badly off — I get my wages regular, and the beer is the best for twenty miles round. But when I heard Meynert talk I thought to myself what a miserable fellow I was, and I said to myself: 'Jacob,' said I, 'how can you put up with such a state of things? Is it worthy of your dignity as a man?'— 'Your dignity as a man' is one of his favorite words you know. Three times I have heard him speak — talk, talk, talk, and it always comes back to that: 'Your dignity as a man.' And for three days after I can keep it in my head. — As I clean the boots I say to myself: 'Jacob,' I say, 'it is beneath your dignity as a man.' As I clean out the stable, between two barrow-loads of litter, I lean the fork against the door-post and double my fists as I think to myself: 'This can't last forever.' But then, just as Meynert says, by degrees I lose my 'manly pride,' and as I might perhaps even forget that I belong to them at all I have got myself into the habit of using certain words— sets of words, you know, just to remind myself as Peltzer says. It is my misfortune, as I may say, that nothing comes amiss to me by way of food, and that I am strong and handy and can do a good stroke of work without turning a hair."

It happened that neither Heinzius nor Wellner

had hitherto had much opportunity of making any intimate acquaintance with the working of the great social question which has set the lower classes in a ferment. At Halldorf, which was not a centre of any particular industry, its influence had not become directly perceptible, and the schoolmaster for his part, was busy with other things; he hated everything that tended to create division. The dissensions rife in Church, State, and Society, appeared to him a serious evil and Otto had insensibly adopted his views. Notwithstanding — or perhaps for this very reason — the confidences of the talkative stable-lad had somewhat excited him. He suddenly found himself face to face with facts and feelings which hitherto had been as far from his ken as the conspiracy of the Gracchi, and it moved him strangely. He would gladly have prolonged the conversation, but in the distance he saw Herr Benno Hellwald, slowly coming up the garden path. Heinzius was in mortal terror, and even Otto, mistrusting his own self-command, thought it prudent to avoid another meeting.

The friends went past the serving man through the house and into the street. They spent the rest of the day until it was quite dark in wandering through the streets and alleys of the irregular little town — past taverns nestling between fac-

tories, like the sparrows' nests among those of the storks — across the market-place, where dense knots of craftsmen, smoking short clay-pipes, were collected in noisy discussion — through the suburban avenues, where love-making couples were enjoying the sweet September evening. And when they got back to their inn they sat up talking over the past and the future and gazing out on the starry sky.

It struck nine — half past; the quaint gables of the inn-yard showed clearly in the moonlight. Suddenly there was a bustle and clatter down there. The stable help fetched out Herr Benno Hellwald's black steed and then Otto heard, in a low voice: "Very much obliged, sir," and the sharp clang of the hoofs on the stone pavement.

"Only going now!" muttered Otto.

The friends resumed their conversation, for the themes were inexhaustible, till midnight tolled ominously from the belfry. Then, with a warm clasp of the hands they went to bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun was high next morning before the friends parted finally. The schoolmaster walked away to the left with unwonted haste; Otto Wellner to the right. The weather was splendid — pleasanter even than the day before, for there was a light breeze from the north-west. Otto was still above two hours and a half from Londorf; there he proposed to take the train for the rest of his journey. He went steadily forward without looking round; he felt conscious of the tear-dimmed eyes of his worthy old friend behind him.

After walking an hour he came to that splendid grove of beech-trees which extends from the beautifully-situated village of Oberhorchheim for about half a mile to the eastward, and which is carefully kept, with benches placed here and there for the convenience of the numerous wealthy citizens who have country-houses in the neighborhood, or who take lodgings there for the summer months. The fashionable season was by this time over; the lodging-house visitors, with few exceptions, had departed; only the fortunate

owners of some of the villas still lingered in the country.

The walk between the tall trees with their green tops whispering in the wind, was perfectly delicious; he met only an old woman bending under a load of fire-wood, and a little ragged girl hunting for the few remaining berries of the year; then all was solemnly still.

Suddenly Otto felt himself overcome by a languid, irresistible fatigue. He sat down on a stone-bench in a bay cut in the wood, folded his hands on his stick and gazed at the ground where the sunlight, falling through the gaps in the leafy roof, played in restless circles on the moss. Presently he took off his knapsack and placing it on the bench to serve as a pillow, he stretched himself at full length. However, he soon found his hard couch uncomfortable, while his wish to rest awhile in this lovely spot was stronger than ever; he stood up and looked about him. To his right the brambles grew thickly and the ground was damp, but on the opposite side of the path, where a few hazel trees grew, the brushwood seemed thinner. He took up his knapsack and went across, and after a short search discovered a hollow where the ground was covered with dry moss and leaves, making a comfortable bed; he settled

himself very much at ease and stretched himself out with the happy satisfaction of a man who, for the moment, has left care behind him, closing his eyes with a smile of beatitude.

He was almost asleep, and the events of the last few days were fast fading into dream-pictures when the sound of a woman's voice which was certainly no part of his dream, roused him to consciousness. He peeped between the hazel bushes. Two young ladies in fashionable dresses—one in white and the other in pink—were coming arm in arm along the path from Oberhorchheim. The voice he had heard was that of the lady in white, a tall, well-built figure of the greatest distinction — nay so elegant that Otto hardly dared take the liberty of thinking how strikingly handsome she was. Her straw hat, wreathed with ivy and flowers, covered the most splendid dark brown hair that he had ever seen; and her well-fitting dress, simple as it was, had that indefinable something which betrays a lady of the upper class and of the capital — that subtle atmosphere of distinction which crushes while it charms the native of a provincial town, however exalted his social position. A cream-colored fan of satin and ivory hung from her waist-band. Her companion, a tall, fair girl with a round baby-face and frank blue

eyes, had not the elastic grace of the darker beauty, but her dress and demeanor none the less revealed a lady accustomed to ease and good society.

"Well, just as you like," said the fairer lady with a smile. "If you are determined I can but submit. But at the present moment — as I am getting tired. . ."

"Tired! Camilla! How can you feel tired in this refreshing shade? However, if you want to rest before we turn back, we are close to 'Ellinor's seat'. . ."

Otto now observed that a tablet was affixed to the trunk of the great beech-tree behind the stone-bench. He had cautiously raised himself to a sitting posture and his sleepiness had entirely vanished. The ladies seated themselves — the tall, handsome one in white, to the left, in the corner; the fair one more in the middle, but she soon moved closer to her companion and laid her head on her shoulder.

Otto's heart beat fast; never in his life had he seen anything at all like the two figures before him — that dark one with the fan must be the daughter of a Minister at the very least. At this moment a vision flashed upon his mind of the dashing young cavalier whom he had seen yester-

day talking to the pretty waiting-maid, and a wild longing thrilled through his veins, a longing to be such another as Herr Benno Hellwald in presence, manner, elegance and ease.

The two ladies went on talking.

"Now do for once be in earnest Camilla," said the darker lady, opening her fan. "You really might trust me in the matter. Between sisters. . ."

"But, really, Lucinda. . ." murmured Camilla looking down.

"How you blush — I am afraid, very much afraid, that my good counsel comes too late."

Otto was hesitating whether, at the risk of overhearing a secret, he should keep quiet and wait till the ladies had gone on again, or whether he might not incur suspicion by revealing his presence there, when suddenly the ladies ceased speaking and he heard footsteps approaching — heavy, clumsy, noisy steps. A few seconds later a singular figure entered on the scene from the right and flung himself on the seat by the side of the two ladies, panting and snorting like some animal. Otto at once recognized his foe of the previous day at the dinner at the Golden Anchor. Ephraim Peltzer wore a broad-fronted cap pulled down over his eyes and his coat was buttoned up

to his chin; in his hand he carried a knotted cudgel. The ladies did not seem particularly delighted at the sudden propinquity of a traveller whose appearance was not such as to inspire confidence — especially Camilla, next to whom he had seated himself.

"It is growing late, Lucinda," she said coloring. "Come let us go on."

"Oho!" cried Peltzer, starting up. "Your ladyships object I suppose to sit side by side with a dirty workman! Heh — that's it, no doubt! Whether our feelings are hurt is nobody's concern; we low fellows are only born to be trampled on! But I have had enough of it, and I tell you, once for all, it is a game I am sick of playing. Now, do you understand?" And he placed himself close in front of the ladies with a threatening swagger, as if to hinder their progress.

Camilla turned pale and Lucinda was evidently startled; but she spoke firmly in reply.

"You are mistaken; we have no wish to hurt or offend you. But we have to get home — that is the simple fact. . ."

"Indeed!" shouted Peltzer, without stirring an inch. "And how is it, I should like to know, that you never thought of that till I sat down beside you? Heaven and Hell! I can tell you I am in

the very mood — this morning a d——d rascal, curse him, bid me go to the devil, as if I was a mangy dog to be turned out of the kennel, and now — I mean to stop here another five minutes, and I do not choose that you should run off as if I had the leprosy!"

Lucinda colored indignantly as she rose.

"Let us pass," she said in a tone of determined command, "or I will call for help."

"Call away!" laughed Peltzer. "You are generally surrounded, I know, by your police and your spies, wherever you go; but here you may shout for them as much as you please. Sit down— sit down I say! and you will beg my pardon — yes, you — or as sure as I live. . ."

He had laid his hand on Lucinda's shoulder, but at this instant he found himself seized by the collar from behind. With one mighty wrench he was flung at full length in among the hazel bushes, losing his cap and dropping his stick as he fell.

"There!" said Otto, quivering with excitement. "And now if you say another word I will see you somewhere — where men of your kidney find short shrift, I can tell you."

"Dog! cursed hound!" groaned Peltzer slowly scrambling on to his knees; his hands were feeling about in the grass that grew by the path, and

before Otto understood what he was doing he had dug out a large stone with his fingers and flung it with all his force at Otto's head. A red stream of blood trickled down the young man's face and he staggered against the trunk of a tree; before he could recover himself Peltzer had taken to his heels.

The ladies had looked on in silent astonishment till, when the stone hit their companion, Camilla had uttered a little cry; but they both seemed stunned with surprise at their unexpected rescue.

"I must beg your forgiveness. . ." Otto stammered out, as he pressed his handkerchief to the wound; but he said no more for it struck him as absurd and clumsy. What was it that deprived him of his presence of mind?—he was not generally so easily put out of countenance. The lady in white went up to him and expressed in warm terms her gratitude and her regret for his injury. Otto muttered a few commonplaces: "it was nothing to speak of"—"a mere trifle" and the like; but he felt himself no more at ease than before. However, at her desire he sat down with the passive resignation of a lamb led to slaughter, and even managed to smile with sickly vacuity while Lucinda pushed back his hair, all matted

with blood, and carefully staunched the wound with her fine cambric handkerchief. Camilla turned away — she could not bear the sight of blood.

"Come, come," said Lucinda presently. "It is not so bad as it might be. Lend me your handkerchief; mine will not do to tie it up."

Otto was still feeling half stunned. The blow from the stone thrown by his infuriated adversary had hardly so much to do with it as the kindly attentions of this elegant young woman who, but a few minutes ago, was so far from his ken — so unapproachably above him. A fragrance as of violets was wafted to him from the folds of that white gown. He felt as if he had fallen asleep on the mossy bank and was only dreaming of all this pleasantness; at last he plucked up courage and spoke again — he moved his lips, but what he said and how he said it he had no idea. However, by the time that Lucinda had succeeded in tying a bandage firmly enough to keep in its place, he had told her his name and the object of his journey; he had chivalrously disclaimed her repeated thanks; he had learnt that the ladies lived in a house at Oberhorchheim, at the further end of the beechwood; and he had consented to accompany them thither and have his wound properly treated

and scientifically dressed by Doctor Föhrenstedt the medical man of the district.

Otto Wellner stood up, his stick in his left hand and in his right his straw hat which he carefully replaced on his head. The dream in which he moved was sweeter and brighter than ever as he walked on through the romantic and murmuring grove by the side of the two graceful ladies, as though they had been acquainted for years and he had never known any other companionship. He had learnt that these ladies whom he had rescued from the brutal workman were the daughters of *Commissionsrath* von Düren, the famous publisher, and Lucinda was the wife of Doctor Lehrbach, a distinguished lawyer who was spending the long vacation at Oberhorchheim. Otto had been surprised to hear that she, whose appearance seemed to him so much more maidenly than that of her younger sister, should be a married woman, but he thought no more about the matter, for the thing that struck him most was that neither of the ladies took any notice of the workman's knapsack which he had shouldered, not without a blush; he did not know that even the gentlemen from the capital were fond of making walking tours with a bag and staff. By degrees he gained courage, and as he shook off the spell of his first embarrass-

ment he talked frankly and freely and so revealed the best side of his sensitive nature, which was, in fact, all the more attractive and sympathetic from the absence of the conventional phrases of drawing-room conversation. Still, he could not bring himself to confess that he was going out into the world without any definite end or aim, as a qualified teacher; it would have been in such evident discord with those refined voices, with the rattle of the ivory fan and the rustle of the flowing gowns. Nor did he say that he had already met the man who had hit him, for the recollection brought up the picture of the smoky inn-parlor, the low company, and the miserable room which he had shared with Heinzius.

In about half an hour they emerged from the wood and reached an iron park-gate. Lucinda pushed it open and went in, followed by Otto and Camilla.

CHAPTER IV.

At the top of a flight of marble steps Otto was received by an old man-servant; with a carefully-cut short beard and a very stiff and aristo-

cratic manner, who led him through a pillared hall to a little drawing-room, while Camilla vanished through the door which gave passage to the man-servant, who had been sent by Frau Lehrbach.

The room in which Otto now found himself was very comfortable, not spacious but lofty; the window, hung with heavy dark curtains admitted a dim light, being screened outside by the branches of a large, knotty acacia. Handsome but rather old-fashioned furniture, a wide fireplace with a splendid Venetian mirror hanging above it, and on each side a bust of yellowish marble on a columnar plinth — this was the first impression made on his mind. But by degrees he perceived a number of minor details which gave the room its aspect of finished luxury.

Wellner took off his hat and pressed his left hand to his wound which began to burn; he instinctively went up to the mirror and looked at himself—his face still showed traces of the blood and he had to confess that the improvised bandage, more practical than picturesque, did not add to his beauty. He thought to himself that he looked just like a country bumpkin who has been to a wake, where jugs and chair-legs have been freely brought into play. A slight noise inter-

rupted his meditations; turning round, he saw the servant, who placed a silver tray with various kinds of refreshment on a bronze table in the window. When he had set it down he said very civilly:

"My master begs you to excuse him as he is detained by important business. But the Doctor, Herr Föhrenstedt, will be here in a quarter of an hour at the latest. Till then would you please to take some refreshment."

"Thank you," said Otto, and the man went away as quietly as he had come. Otto went to the table and out of the smaller of two cut-glass decanters he filled a glass with Spanish wine; the rich brown liquor shone against the light with gleams of crimson and gold, and had a delicious perfume. Otto, who was almost dying of thirst, though, during his walk, he had not liked to take his common wicker flask out of his pocket, emptied the glass at a draught. It rushed like fire through his veins, burning and yet reviving him — a truly magical draught, whose merits might have persuaded the worthy Heinzius out of his theoretical admiration of the Caecuban and other vintages of the ancients. Otto took a second and a third glass; he felt its encouaging effect on his now half-extinct assurance. After all — what did it

matter if the inhabitants of this lordly residence were to know that he was nothing more than an unsuccessful schoolmaster, about to start his stranded bark on a fresh voyage? An unsuccessful schoolmaster! That was the phrase that passed through his brain. He could not help laughing, and yet he felt a spasm of embarrassment such as he had experienced in looking at himself in the glass.

Again the door opened; two gentlemen came in. The elder, a man of middle height and rather stout, might be about fifty; his round, clean-shaved face, with its fresh color and attractive features had an expression of genial intelligence. This was Doctor Lehrbach. His companion, a man of forty, was taller and slighter and wore an uncommonly handsome, full, dark beard. A pale rather worn face, velvety brown eyes with a somewhat rapt expression, fine white hands, a high forehead, patent leather boots that creaked discreetly, and a cautious gentle demeanor — combined to give the idea of a man selected by Destiny to win the confidence and the passionate veneration of the female sex, while men would neither understand nor admit his undoubted success. Doctor Föhrenstedt could, in fact, boast of few friends, but he had a large following of lady-

patients who could be cured of nervousness and such ailments by the mere fact of his presence. It had even been whispered that he took advantage of these personal charms to win triumphs in another department than that of therapeutics; these rumors, however, had not availed to imperil him in his position as a fashionable physician. He still practised in the highest circles of society, and in the summer, when he had sent off the last hysterical old maid to take baths or drink waters, he retired to his villa at Oberhorchheim, within a few hundred yards of that of the Von Dürens.

The elder man spoke first.

"My name is Lehrbach," he said kindly, "and I am glad to make the acquaintance of a man who knows so well how to deal with tramps and bullies. My wife has told me the whole story and I am greatly indebted to you; but it is a pity that it should have ended somewhat tragically. I ventured to disturb our Aesculapius over his oysters — Herr Doctor Föhrenstedt, Herr Wellner — I think you said?"

Otto bowed, the physician almost imperceptibly nodded. Under other circumstances Otto might have paused to wonder why the owner of the handsome beard was so frigid in his greeting, but there was no time now for such reflections.

That, then, was the husband of the beautiful Lucinda! Amiable and polite as Dr. Lehrbach was, disappointment—nay vexation—outweighed every other sentiment. Lucinda was at most one or two and twenty while Lehrbach had seen at least fifty summers, though he was still fresh, active, and well-preserved. Still, even if he had been twenty years younger, he would not in Otto's opinion have been a match for Lucinda. By the side of that princess a prince ought to stand — a tall, splendid and all-conquering man, a hero to whom she might look up to with respect.

The old man-servant now appeared once more, followed this time by the short, round figure of a maid carrying a can of water, two basins and some linen towels.

"Put them there, Fanny," he said with much dignity. The girl put the things down on the hearthstone; she was evidently anxious to linger longer than was necessary; her eyes wandered to right and left, and her attention was divided between Otto Wellner and the medical man who had gone close to the patient.

"Might I trouble you?" he said, pointing to the handkerchief.

Otto tried to undo the knot, but as he did not at once succeed the bare-armed Fanny made bold

to offer her services; she, however, twitched and pulled without any better success.

"There, let it be. . ." said the doctor, and with a firm jerk he snatched the bandage off; Otto started and winced, for this sudden pull hurt him a good deal, and the blood at once flowed again.

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" exclaimed Lehrbach, while the servants made their way out of the room. "It is a very respectable gash — six or eight sutures. . ."

"And quite close to the artery," added Föhrenstedt.

The doctor examined the wound to assure himself that there were no splinters of bone to be removed, and then set to work with characteristic deliberation to sew up the cut which was an inch and a half long. When this painful operation was ended he no less deliberately washed his hands, saying in a low voice:

"There — now you must lie in bed for five or six days. The covering of the bone is injured and the flesh-wound a good deal lacerated and bruised. If I had time I would come and look at it again; but there is a practitioner from Gernsheim who has patients in the neighborhood and who can do everything that will be needed. I may take leave of you."

He bowed his handsome head as imperceptibly as before, favored the lawyer with a polite smile and was gone.

"Just like him," said Lehrbach, when his footsteps ceased to be audible. "As exclusive as a prince of the blood! Excepting to ladies — and not to all of them. He would not have come at all if I had sent a servant, so I went myself, for I feared lest delay might be dangerous."

He spoke with such genial warmth that Otto mentally apologized to Lucinda's husband for his former estimate of him and he heartily thanked his new acquaintance for his benevolent interest.

"Nonsense!" said Lehrbach. "Why, you have come off worst in the affair. The thanks are due from us — my wife and Camilla and me — *nota bene*, from my papa-in-law, too, who offers you the use of his house — which is the very least he can do."

"I should not like to be troublesome," stammered Otto. "If it were in any way possible that I should get as far as Londorf. . ."

"And who is to look after you there? No, young man, that is quite out of the question. What are there a dozen spare rooms in the house for? In short — it is settled already." He went to the door.

"Holtmann!" he called out, and the man-servant appeared; in answer to Lehrbach's enquiry he said that everything was ready, and added that his master, Herr von Düren would be down in two minutes to bid Herr Wellner welcome, here, in the little drawing-room.

"Very good; I will leave you in his charge," said Lehrbach giving the young man his hand. "Holtmann, you are to take special care of your patient and I will see him every day. And so, God bless you, my young friend. Try to be patient. It is dull work lying tucked up and out of sight with a lump of ice on your head, but no one can do it for you. Take care of yourself."

He went down the steps into the park and a moment after the master of the house came in, a tall man with grey hair and strongly marked and expressive features, who kept his right hand in the breast of his tightly-fitting coat with the dignity of a prince holding an audience. He greeted his unexpected guest with measured politeness, thanked him briefly for the important service he had rendered the ladies, lamented the unfortunate result, and begged him to follow the servant who would show him to a room and take care that everything should be provided to enable him to carry out the doctor's orders. If Herr Wellner

wished for anything he had only to mention it to Holtmann.

This was the sum total of the interview. Herr von Düren bowed, it can hardly be said condescendingly but certainly with extreme reserve, and went his way.

Holtmann who had evidently taken his master's peculiarities as his model in more respects than one, at once offered to show the young man to his room, begging, with mechanical civility, to be excused for leading the way. He went across the hall to a stair-case of which the thickly carpeted steps — like everything else in the house — bore the stamp of all-pervading and conscious but not ostentatious wealth. A grey-hound that lay sleeping on the first landing, with his pointed nose resting on his forefeet, did not disturb himself as the two men passed him — a plain proof that visitors were not infrequent in Herr von Düren's villa. The huge candelabra, the exotic plants, the marble statues which decorated the corridors, and the fine pictures by well-known masters that hung on the walls, made a great impression on Otto Wellner. What enormous sums must have been lavished only on the stairs and passages! — It was evident that Herr von Düren was a perfect Croesus — rolling in gold — and he, Otto Wellner, was to

stay under the roof of the millionaire — he whose whole possessions would hardly suffice to "tip" Holtmann and pretty Miss Fanny if he were to attempt to vie in any degree with the magnificence that surrounded him.

The door which the man threw open led into a pleasant room with two windows. Miss Fanny was standing by a carved oak wash-stand with a marble top, where she was filling the cans and jugs.

"I will send Hans to you," said Holtmann, after he had glanced round the room. "Here is the bell, by the bed, and Hans will always be close at hand till you are up again. Now, Fanny, have you done?"

"In a minute. Hans will see about the ice?"

"Of course," but he did not go.

"You need not wait Holtmann," said the girl. "I must pin the blinds across; there is such a glare."

Holtmann disappeared and two minutes later was followed by Fanny. Otto, lost in thought, was in no mood to begin a conversation as she had hoped; but her marked behavior was not lost upon him. It was a bold though scarcely an impudent attempt at a flirtation; it was evidently part

of her habits; there was nothing personal in its character. An indifferent observer would have concluded: "This girl flirts from a feeling that every presentable individual of the stronger sex may possibly prove to be the He who is destined by Fate to open the gates of a happy future for her to enter in." In what that happiness was to consist she had no very clear idea; but that it was not identical with a mere commonplace desire to "get married," was legible in the girl's face—in a restless manner, a keen, wandering eye, and a peculiarly sensuous mouth which plainly betrayed a passion for the secret draining of half-emptied champagne glasses.

Fanny was gone, and there was a loud rap at the door. This was Hans, a good-natured lad, radiantly robust, who first placed a silver wine-cooler full of rough ice on the table near the bed, and then, with a sort of military subordination, placed himself at the gentleman's orders. Otto put his knapsack under the pillow of the grand four-post bed; he was glad to allow hands to help him to undress, for his wound was extremely painful and the slightest movement made his head throb and ache. In five minutes all was ready, and the application of ice was not merely cooling to the wound but soothing to his excited nerves.

As it grew dusk Herr Lehrbach came to see him, and enquire how he was getting on; Camilla and his wife had particularly charged him to do so. Finding that Otto was feeling well considering the circumstances, he sat down to chat. He asked the young man whither the journey so unexpectedly interrupted had tended, what were his plans and hopes, what his past history and his present prospects. Hans had withdrawn when the lawyer came in, and Otto, who was strongly attracted by his new friend's frank kindliness, did not hesitate to tell him the exact truth — the modesty of his position, the greatness of his ambition, and his idea that it was only in a great city that he was likely to find employment which might, on one hand, give him the regular means of existence and, on the other, offer him an opening for distinguishing himself as he wished.

Lehrbach made no reserve of his doubts and warnings; he would meet with disappointments and annoyances without end, he said. Then he went on:

"Be that as it may, I feel sure that you will succeed by hook or by crook. You have plenty of backbone in spite of your hot blood, that I can see — and are fully resolved to make the best of it, *brevi manu*, wherever fate may cast you.

That is just what I like, and I have taken a great fancy to you. I like a young fellow that does not hang his head helplessly when he is told to make his own way through the world. If he comes across a friend who can show him the road for a little way, so much the better; I will see what I can do for you. At any rate be sure you come to see me — in town I mean — Theresienstrasse No. 19. I shall be there by the end of the month. And for the present keep quiet, that you may get well the sooner." He shook hands with the patient, Otto feeling almost ashamed. What had he done to deserve this overflow of friendliness and good-will.

When Lehrbach had left him he lay weary and exhausted, listening to the heavy tick of the clock in the corridor till, soon after, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER V.

Otto passed the next few days in dismal monotony. He was in too much pain to listen for any length of time to Hans' well-meant efforts at reading aloud—essays and stories from the weekly magazine "Die Glocke." He was interested to learn that this magazine, and a new encyclopedia

of political economy, were the principal issues of the firm of A. H. Düren — the late father of his present host — and that they brought in a yearly net profit of half a million, but though he willingly listened to these and other details more or less lucidly stated, they failed to increase his pleasure in his good-natured attendant's monotonous performance, and he declined his repeated offer. For six dreary days he had no amusement but Lehrbach's short visits and those of the doctor from Gernsheim, his meals, and the various sounds that fell on his ear, coming up from the park below his window. These sounds supplied his fancy with a series of pictures. The barking of the greyhound, the grinding of carriage-wheels, or the trampling of saddle-horses; or, more often, voices of every degree — the aristocratic drawl and the dignified mumble — youthful and clear, or old and weak — silvery, sonorous, or hard.

Once — early in the morning—Otto distinctly recognized Lucinda's, Camilla's, and a third which struck him as familiar, though he failed to identify when and where he had heard it. A few hours later, when the same voice called from the outside steps: "Philip bring the horse round!" Otto asked Fanny — who, in the absence of Hans, was co-

quetting over the operation of giving him a basin of soup with a spoon — whether the gentleman who had given this order was by any chance Dr. Wolf, the editor of the magazine.

"Oh no!" said the girl with a languishing glance. "Dr. Wolf is away you know, travelling in Switzerland, where the avalanches are and the everlasting Alpine glow. The gentleman down there is Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz, a distant relation of my master. How they are connected Herr von Düren himself does not know; but his mother was a Von Tyllichau. The Sassnitz has been added since; it means something—but after all, you will not care. . . ."

"Does Herr von Tyllichau live here?"

"Did not you know? He has been on a visit here for half the summer. But there, the house is always full of visitors. For the last week we have had the professor who is writing the encyclopedia. Such a learned man! and he can swill drink too, I can tell you! Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz is not one of those who look shy at a bottle or two, but old Salomon will not be put off with the water."

"And what does Herr von Tyllichau do?" asked Otto, after a pause. "Is he a student, or what is he?"

"Well, as you may say nothing at all. He was an officer for a short time, but they say he quarrelled with his colonel; at any rate one fine day he threw it up — and now he hangs about the house here. He enjoys life — eats and drinks and smokes cigars of the first brand. Well, and he is a fine young gentleman, that no one can deny, and makes no bones over a little present now and then .... while the professor — well, he is very different."

Here the entertainment ended; the basin was empty and Fanny carried it away, answering Holtmann at last, who was calling her for the third time.

At the end of a week the doctor pronounced the wound so far healed that Otto might leave his room. He stuck his straw hat over his forehead, which was still bandaged, and Lehrbach, who had been waiting for him, thrust his hand through the young man's arm and led him out saying with kind familiarity:

"So far so good! Meanwhile I have been taking the liberty of thinking over your plans and prospects. You told me that you had learnt something; but you want the official stamp, the hall-mark of a certificate, of having passed an examination and all that sort of thing. The world

in which we have the honor to live is very tenacious on such points. You may be in perfect health and have been vaccinated three times over, but unless you can show the vaccination marks no respectable family will take you as an inmate. So it is — and so it ought to be, though in a few special cases it may seem unjust and hard. Now, in the first place you cannot go to the University, because the yearly examination at which you seem to have covered yourself with glory by the help of your marvellous village schoolmaster, is of no use *pro maturitate*. So nothing remains but to find an employment which requires some education though it makes no exceptional demands on height, breadth or depth of culture. To make a long story short, I have spoken to my father-in-law; I have made it clear to him: first, that you are an intelligent and useful sort of fellow; secondly, that your purse is consumptive; and thirdly, that we are under particular obligations to the firm of Wellner of Halldorf. — Now, hold your tongue— and mind you do not slip on the marble steps. I have proved to him as plainly as a sum by rule of three that your curly head felt the blow which, figuratively speaking, was intended to hit my wife Lucinda. — Hold your tongue. — If the ruffian was so ready with his fling it might beyond a

doubt have happened. — However — all that is beside the question and I need hardly say that I did not pelt the facts at the great man quite so hard as I am now doing at you. Well, he promised to find a place for you somewhere in his great establishment — for where five hundred people are employed there are always vacancies, or extra hands needed — but this is a mere detail. So to-day or to-morrow Herr von Düren will send for you and talk the matter over with you. At the same time, it is only fair to warn you — you must not count on anything very splendid. Herr von Düren is cautious, stern and punctilious; he likes people to work their way up from the ranks.—But silence, Herr Wellner. Here comes the doctor's wife, Frau Föhrenstedt; I will introduce you to her. She happened to be sitting in the veranda with Frau von Düren when you came into the park as a wounded Samaritan and she saw the blood-stained knight-errant come up the steps; she was quite agitated when she heard what had happened. But indeed, ever since that deed of prowess you have been the hero of the season — especially among the ladies.—Allow me, my dear Madam, to introduce the Perseus who rescued Andromeda from the Dragon; Herr Otto Wellner . . . Frau Föhrenstedt — Anna Föhrenstedt;

I like to be as exact as possible in matters of identity; you must allow it in an old lawyer."

The lady who was young, blushed to the roots of her hair; a blush which was all the more singular as she betrayed birth and breeding in every detail of her appearance. Her dress was simple but well chosen; she moved with quiet grace and the few words she addressed to Otto were polite and appropriate. Otto looked with extreme interest at her face, which, though not pretty, was delicate, and which bore unmistakable traces of mental suffering; as the swift blush faded her complexion suggested the texture of a white camellia flower. Silent submission to a sad fate, hopeless resignation—this was the expression that settled on her pure, closed lips. Some years since—the doctor's wife was now seven and twenty—those lips no doubt had smiled and jested; nothing was left now but a pensive autumnal smile, the faded remains of her former light-heartedness. It was a well-known fact that the doctor's wife was the most unhappy woman in the capital. She had married the doctor—at that time no more than the assistant of a medical man since dead—in a fit of rapturous admiration, her head fairly turned by his languishing and imploring gaze; Föhrenstedt himself fondly adored

his gentle Anna, with her "corn-colored hair," as he called it in his inspired verse; and the honey-moon passed in "golden sunshine." But, ere long, the vain and fickle man, finding the whole feminine world at his feet, ceased to take pleasure in celebrating the merits of undying love; the cup, from which he at first had drunk an eager draught, he found to be shallow; and now began a course of neglect, unkindness and infidelity which must undoubtedly have led to a separation but that Anna, in spite of her wounded pride, was as madly in love as ever with her heartless husband, who treated her with scorn and aversion and whom she nevertheless could not bear to part from. In the course of years the miserable woman had become accustomed to her fate; her love had at length died of cold in the freezing atmosphere of a life which was varied in its tenor only by the superficial incidents of daily life or the discovery of some new break of faith on her husband's part. She had no children; her frost-bitten heart was thrown back on itself, and her face assumed that look of silent endurance which had gained her among her intimate friends the nickname of "the passion-flower."

After exchanging a few words with the lawyer, Frau Föhrenstedt went into the house with a

slightly shuffling but not ungraceful gait, and Lehrbach, as he walked on with Wellner, said:

"I will take you as far as that bench and then leave you to your fate. If Von Düren sends for you be calm and confident though, of course, not arrogant. That is what he likes in a man; extreme politeness he loathes.— So now God be with you!"

Otto sat down and his friend turned into the house again. What would Karl Theodor Heinzius say if he could know how soon the small craft of his former pupil had found a haven? He must write to the schoolmaster this very day — he would wonder when he got the letter why Otto should date from Oberhorchheim; and as he read on . . . !

Otto's thoughts were still far away, in his dear old friend's little attic, when another party came out on the steps.

"If you will go on, Herr Tyllichau," said Camilla's voice, "I will go back and see what has become of Lucinda and Anna." And she disappeared behind the colonnade before Wellner had seen more than her sky-blue dress, while the gentleman whom she had addressed came down the steps and straight along the path.

Otto thought he must be dreaming. In Herr

von Tyllichau who was coming towards him he recognized that Benno Hellwald whom he had seen gossiping with Martha in the garden of the Golden Anchor. He almost forgot the details of their unpleasant interview in sheer astonishment. Then this smart young gentleman had one name at Gernsheim and another at Oberhorchheim! But why? What for? It could hardly be with a view to avoiding the homage which the populace might be anxious to offer to the scion of the illustrious house of Tyllichau-Sassnitz — but Otto had no leisure to continue his cogitations, for Herr von Tyllichau had not come more than half way to the bench when he stopped short and went through a brief pantomime that excited Otto's greatest curiosity.

"Heaven and earth!" muttered Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz — *alias* Benno Hellwald — as his eye fell on the convalescent, sunning himself on the garden seat. He was usually reserved in his language, but this adjuration escaped him as being the only adequate expression of his feelings. What a state of things! This then was the brave deliverer of whom the ladies spoke with such fervent gratitude! This man! and here — here where Herr von Tyllichau was on the very point of making the last decisive assault on the heart of

the fair Camilla. If this man were to tell . . . But the incident must be wiped out once for all by a rational arrangement. He need only say a few pleasant words to this Herr Wellner — a sort of explanation — but at once, on the spot, every minute might be fatal!

Eric, Baron von Tyllichau, approached Otto with as much ease as he could command, bowed politely and said with a smile:

"I hope, Sir, that a very few words of apology from me will suffice to dispel any ill-feeling — you know to what I allude — as completely as mine has vanished. To be frank with you, I was a little annoyed and startled; but when I learnt that it was you, to whom all this family feel under such great obligations, I was delighted to count such a trifle as bygone and forgotten. I could not doubt your identity for a moment from my cousin's vivid description — and I am only sorry . . ."

Otto had slowly risen during this speech. He had resolved to treat the young man with the most distant politeness, but the engaging candor of this address conquered him at once. Tyllichau's ease and amiability were so irresistible that Otto could only stammer out an apology and accept the hand which the baron offered.

"I have only one thing to request," said Eric, as though it were merely incidental. "When the ladies join us will you oblige me by not mentioning how and where we last met. I will tell you my reasons quite candidly — I am a great admirer of my cousin Camilla, and so far as I can judge she likes me: this is of course strictly between ourselves. Now you know that a young lady is apt to judge differently of certain things from us . . ."

"From us!" Otto would not confess it to himself, but it flattered him to be included by Tyllichau in the class of men of the world who judge "differently." He bowed. "Bless me!" Tyllichau went on: "Who can change his nature? For my part, I confess whenever I see a pretty face I am apt to rave about it. That little Martha at the Golden Anchor is really so charming and so innocent that I cannot see why I should not pass the few hours I must spend there in her society, rather than chatting with the tedious philistines in the parlor. Our ladies, of course — the waiting-maid is to them scarcely a human being. They regard it as derogatory only to look at such persons; as if there were any disgrace in working for a living."

Otto very naturally felt this remark rather ill-

timed. He made no reply, but his silence was sufficient assent for the young gentleman.

"By the way," he went on in a tone of perfect indifference, "you need not be surprised at my having given my name as Benno Hellwald — my real name is Tyllichau — Eric, Baron von Tyllichau. I could easily convince you — my real rank — you must admit . . ."

"Certainly," said Otto with a suspicion of irony in his tone, and the young Baron frowned slightly. But he immediately added with haughty politeness:

"Then I have your word."

Otto's heart beat high; Camilla and Lucinda were coming down the avenue charmingly dressed, their skirts somewhat shortened and fresh flowers in their hair. Behind them walked the doctor's wife and a tall clean-shaven man with a singular mixed expression of intelligence and narrowness. Something very like genius sparkled in his small keen eyes, but the rest of his face contradicted it. His sandy-grey hair was parted on the crown and fell over his low forehead in a fringe; the small size of his head was a conspicuous peculiarity. This singular-looking man was dressed in black; a fine diamond pin glittered in his neck-tie and his cuff-buttons were unusually large. Camilla was

carrying on her left arm half a dozen hoops bound round with colored ribbands, and in her hand she had a bundle of light canes — the appurtenances of the favorite old game of *Les Graces*, now again becoming fashionable.

"I will not intrude," said Otto to Tyllichau, and he looked about him as if he wished to escape, but it was too late.

"Here is our patient!" exclaimed Camilla. "I am glad to see you, Herr Wellner: so you are released at last." She went up to Otto and offered him her hand as if they were old friends. Lucinda also greeted him kindly but with less effusion.

"I have already expressed my sincere esteem to Herr Wellner," said Eric von Tyllichau, relieving Camilla of the hoops and sticks; then turning to the other couple he added: "Allow me to introduce to you the gentleman who for so many days has been the object of our gratitude and sympathy. Herr Otto Wellner — Frau Föhrenstedt, Herr Kurt Ewald." Anna Föhrenstedt blushed as she had done before.

"I have already had the honor — not ten minutes since . . ." stammered Otto with a bow to the lady; then he added a few polite words to her slim companion, who slightly drooped his eyelids and put on a smile intended to be polite.

Von Tyllichau twirled the hoops on the sticks.

"I see that we must not at present count on the professor," he said.

"Papa seems to have detained him," replied Camilla. "So far as I am concerned it seems to me that five can play croquet very well; but Lucinda says that if you take two balls on one side it makes it too unequal."

"Oh! do you think so?" said Eric turning to Lucinda. "Then will you not take two balls?"

"That is equally unfair unless you could make up your mind to be my partner;—and," she added sarcastically, "after all that has happened there seems but little prospect of that."

"How so?" asked Tyllichau; but Lucinda only shrugged her shoulders.

"*Les Graces*," began Kurt Ewald in his thin, high voice, "does not seem to find favor in Herr von Tyllichau's eyes."

"I find it dull, I confess," said the baron. "At croquet one can talk, but at *Les Graces* we all stand apart like sentinels on duty." Camilla looked down and colored.

Tyllichau, who said to himself that the longest and pleasantest part of this free and easy country life was over, had made very accurate calculations from his own point of view. He could not afford

to waste any opportunity for fanning the spark that he had lighted in Camilla's heart; every word was of value and importance. Tyllichau felt that he had nothing to count upon but the persistency of her liking for him — considering the silent but decided opposition that he would have to encounter from Camilla's mother and sister, both of whom took care on every opportunity, without any breach of the laws of politeness and hospitality, to make him feel that they regarded him as an extremely distant connection, and had no wish to diminish the formalities of their relations. Herr von Düren, who rather encouraged the young baron, was too much absorbed with his extensive business — even at Oberhorchheim — to be of any value as a counterpoise. A weakness of the noble family from which his mother was descended prejudiced him in favor of the young baron; the Dürens were of the middle class; the present representative was the first to be ennobled with the prefix *von* only a few years since, and from that date he had been wont to lay more emphasis on the long pedigree on his mother's side. His sympathy with Eric's aims was however not very pronounced; it only floated in the air, while the antipathetic attitude of his wife and married daughter stood on a firm basis. His best ally

therefore was Camilla herself who certainly liked him, and to inflame this liking to a glow of passion was Tyllichau's fixed and constant endeavor. Every drop of oil that he could throw on the embers might prove decisive. The baron's preference for croquet was founded on this evident fact; any other game interfered with his progress; it was only at croquet — that precious invention contrived by Love himself for the furtherance of tender interviews — that he saw the bright prospect of exchanging a few whispered words now and then with the lady of his choice. He knew so well how to send the adversary's ball — and particularly Lucinda's — to the uttermost ends of the ground, or how to hit his own into the immediate neighborhood of Camilla's, that he was quite master of the situation.

He was prompt in action; giving his little beard a graceful twist he said in his clearest and sweetest tones:

"The majority I see are all for croquet. Perhaps Herr Wellner would be so good as to make a sixth for the first game."

"Oh! yes, do, Herr Wellner," begged the fair Camilla.

"I am extremely sorry," said Otto, "but I am entirely ignorant of the game."

"How can that be?" said Camilla. "Why, everybody plays it."

"Madam, I come from Halldorf, and at Halldorf there is not a soul of those you call 'everybody!'"

"It is all the same," said Eric. "It does not take two minutes to explain the rules, and the game needs no very special skill. You will be doing the ladies a pleasure — will you not join us?"

"But his wound?" asked Frau Föhrenstedt.

"It is as good as healed!" cried Tyllichau, leading the way to the croquet-ground. "Come along, ladies; you will see, we shall get on famously."

Five minutes later Otto Wellner found himself playing croquet with as skilful and as fashionable a party as ever held mallets in a gentleman's pleasure-grounds. Herr von Tyllichau displayed such brilliant accuracy and such grace of action, Herr Kurt Ewald smiled with such blasé archness from under his idiot-fringe, the ladies set their neatly-shod little feet with such fascinating airs on the red, blue, and green wooden balls, that Otto felt he had never seen anything so refined and delightful. Add to all this the cloudless September sky, the beautiful park, and, on the other side of the

smooth croquet-ground, the handsome villa — spacious, and princely — it was like a fairy-tale.

Thus passed a quarter of an hour; the first game was nearly at an end and Eric von Tyllichau with Camilla and Frau Föhrenstedt had as good as won it, when it was interrupted by the advent of a short, thickset personage in a grey summer-suit. This was the professor: Dr. Heinrich Salomon, the editor of the New Encyclopedia; peering about him behind the glittering glasses of his spectacles, he came down the gravel walk, while from time to time he raised an enormous straw hat that covered his bushy head of hair.

His approach was hailed with satisfaction by every one of the party.

"Ah! my dear professor," cried the baron hurrying to meet him. "Have you at length escaped the chains of your responsibilities? We are all anxiously waiting for you."

"That is very kind of you," came in a deep rolling bass from under the short, thick moustache, while the smoothly-shaved chin below moved up and down like that of an old man mumbling some hard morsel. "But duty first, I had a most important article to consider — an article on Social Democracy which Professor Hebenstreit had prepared for our Third Edition. In view of the fact

that the professor himself is no longer in the land of the living I have myself undertaken the revision of the essay, and, as I flatter myself, not incompetently . . . I have, as you know, already reduced the subject *ad absurdum* in a somewhat lengthy pamphlet. I have insisted on the incompatibility of the premises with the deductions; I have pointed out the ways and methods of confuting it; I have. . ."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Ewald. "Your pamphlet is admirable; it quite astonished me; nay, to be frank with you, it is the only thing which I can fully sympathize with in the whole of your political career."

"Young man," replied the professor, "you are candid, and your staunchness commands respect. When will your ultra-conservatism discover the fact that Liberalism is the born foe of socialist follies? That, in fact Liberalism alone has a philosophical perception of what is ridiculous in this tendency — philosophical, I say — and therefore has more power than any other party to exterminate Socialism from the face of the earth? — Well, well — enough of that; I see you smile. Smile away, Herr Ewald! we can be capital friends all the same. But enough of that; I only wanted to explain why Herr von Düren had

detained me. Croquet, is it to be? or, to be exact, has it been? I am at your service. But — by the arrow in his heel shall you know Achilles the son of Peleus. . ."

He raised the straw hat and went towards Otto.

"My name is Salomon. I imagine that I am right in inferring from your bandaged head your identity as Herr Otto Wellner?"

Otto bowed.

"It is well," the professor went on. "We heard from Herr Lehrbach that your doctor had sent you into the garden; Herr von Düren therefore begged me to inform you of his wish to see you in his study at your earliest convenience. And while I execute his commission I have the honor of expressing my satisfaction at having the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

It was extremely difficult to guess from the professor's manner how much of it was conscious humor and how much unconscious absurdity. He emphasized every word with rolling unction, as though he were delivering the key to the mystery of the universe, and seemed to turn the syllables over on his tongue with a relish, like a gourmand who thoroughly enjoys a morsel before he swallows it. However, as the rest of the company

evidently regarded his demeanor as perfectly normal, Otto refrained from uttering the words that Salomon's apparently ironical speech brought to his lips. He merely handed over the croquet mallet to the professor and bowed politely as he left the ground.

"God be with you, young man!" cried Salomon with oracular solemnity. "I can fill your place here!" He flourished the mallet over his shoulder and Otto made his way to the house with an anxious heart.

Herr Georg von Düren received him with extreme reserve.

"Take a seat," he said without rising from his arm-chair. "My son-in-law, the lawyer, Dr. Lehrbach, has told me something of your circumstances. You have at the present moment no employment or position?" Otto assented.

"Have you any testimonials?"

"A certificate of qualification for one year's voluntary service."

"Very good — any other references?"

"I could procure them. Certainly — as I told Herr Lehrbach. . ."

"My son-in-law told me everything. He takes so much interest in you indeed that I could not avoid — and indeed I myself am indebted to

you for your prowess in the wood. So listen to me. A place as clerk will be vacant in the office of our weekly issue after the first of October; the pay is small, but you may rise by degrees. I offer it to you."

"Sir, you are most kind. May I ask what will be required of me?"

"Nothing at all difficult. To write addresses, fill in circulars, and send back manuscripts; now and then to compose a letter and to read revises."

"Revises?"

"That is what we call the second proofs of printed matter. You will soon understand that."

"Sir, I am very much obliged and will try at any rate whether I am capable."

"I must add a condition: I shall require you to make no attempt to prosecute the man who threw the stone at you. My daughters would necessarily be involved in the affair and summoned as witnesses; and, as you will feel, such a proceeding is unpleasant, to say the least of it, for ladies of good position."

"Certainly."

"The doctor tells me that you only need a few day's change now to be quite well. I will take the liberty of handing you a sum of two hundred

marks* for the purpose and as an indemnity for the time you have lost. If you wish to leave Oberhorchheim a carriage is very much at your service."

Otto turned paler; a polite refusal of the money was on the tip of his tongue. It seemed to him that Von Düren meant it as payment in full for the service he had done him, and at the same time the offer of the carriage implied a wish that the hospitality of the house should not be extended to the involuntary visitor any longer than was absolutely necessary. But the great man's manner was so deliberate, calm, and dignified that Otto simply did not dare to give expression to his touchy pride. He mechanically accepted the envelope containing the bank-note, thanked the donor, and said in a firm voice:

"I shall be leaving this afternoon; I am really perfectly recovered. On the first of October then. . ."

"At nine in the morning, punctually," added Von Düren with a slight bow of dismissal.

Two hours later, a hired chaise, which Hans had fetched, carried Otto Wellner along the road to Londorf; he had quitted the villa without taking leave of any of the inhabitants. How could the

*Fifty Dollars.

son of the bookbinder of Halldorf intrude on the daughters of his future master with the trivial announcement of his departure? The only person whose hand he would have cared to grasp — Dr. Lehrbach—was not to be found; so Otto charged the young servant, on whom he bestowed one of his gold coins, to bid him respectfully farewell. He was carried through the pretty hilly landscape, his head leaning on his hand and paying no heed to the scenery, not knowing himself why he felt so sad and heavy at heart.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUR days had Otto been in the noisy capital. In the *Sandgasse*, number seventy on the fourth floor, he had found a very humble lodging. This little street is in the western quarter of the city where a dense and prolific population of laborers and artizans live crowded into the quaint little houses of the old suburb, or in the flats of the many-storied structures, run up by speculative builders, and which straggle in unfinished streets far out into the fields.

Here — where the view from the window was across the roofs of neighboring houses to a clump

of oaks on the southwest horizon, seen through the reek of steam and smoke from huge factories—sat Otto in the dusk, within the circle cast by the shade of his paraffin lamp, writing to Karl Theodor Heinzius.

He was not a little homesick.

"My dear Friend"—so he began. "You can have no idea what it is to go out into the world without a soul that you know, to see on every side faces so utterly indifferent that it is difficult to remember one from another—and then to think of the happy intimacies of the past! On my word, Heinzius, I feel exactly as if I were one of those fitted bricks which are piled one above another, hundreds and hundreds of them, to make a smoking flue. All one's individuality is lost in this heartless chaos. A man is of no use but as a fraction of the whole mass—as a cipher in the sum total. To-day particularly, for it has been dull and wet and I have come in early from my afternoon walk in the very heart of it all—I feel it deeply. Out here, in the suburbs, where the squalid struggle for bare life is perpetually going on, where the advertisements and notices that cover every wall are a perpetual reminder that in every branch of industry the supply exceeds the demand, where the women are

pale and the men ruffianly, I constantly experience a feeling of nullity that is quite crushing. Here, of course, as elsewhere, comfortable and contented folks are to be found; but I have no eyes for them now — I can see nothing but what is dingy, sad, and sunless. For instance, picture to yourself the lordly portal by which I daily pass in and out. To the left, half-underground, is a beer-shop for cab-drivers; to the right, a vegetable stall; above, up to the second floor, the front is entirely covered with dozens of sign-boards, and advertisements which make the house, which is not a particularly large one, look as if it were in itself a whole town: 'Two bedrooms to let,' 'Mangling done, at home or on the premises,' three or four notices of 'Handsome furnished apartments;' there hang the brass basin that announces a barber, a blouse-maker's sign who calls himself a tailor, and a modest little plate stating that 'private lessons are given by a gentleman on the fourth floor — please ring twice.' On the fourth floor! This gentleman, then, is my immediate neighbor, but to this hour I have never set eyes on him. I cannot think what it is that makes me prefer a solitude in which I am so truly miserable. Probably it is the tremendous contrast between this wretched hovel and the fairy-

like splendor of the villa at Oberhorchheim, with its grand columns, its shining marble, its bright-green grass-plots, its lovely ladies! — one especially, the wife of my kind protector — I can tell you, Heinzius, if you could see that face you would behave even more queerly than you did at the 'Golden Anchor.' You would sing 'Lucinda, Lucinda,' from morning till night, and Martha would fade into oblivion."

Otto had written this much when he heard two sharp raps at the door. "Come in," he said somewhat surprised, for his landlady always knocked very humbly, and it could not be the postman since the letter he was in the act of writing was to give his address to the schoolmaster. It was in fact neither the postman nor Frau Lersner, but a tall slight man of eight and twenty or thirty; pale, as if constantly up all night, with dark prominent eyes and thick long hair which stood up from his forehead almost straight on end and fell back in a perfect mane.

"My name," he said, "is Roderich Lund. I wished to pay my respects to my new neighbor. We live next door to each other."

"Pray take a seat," said Wellner in some surprise. The young man sat down.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance," he

went on. "I have taken a great fancy to your personal appearance. Your coming was a benefit to me, for your predecessor was a dreadfully restless creature who was humming or knocking all day long and scared away all my best ideas."

"You are very kind. I am sorry that I have not even a cigar to offer you . . ."

"Precisely my case. I know too little of glittering mammon to indulge in such luxuries as tobacco." Otto cast a sidelong glance at his visitor. "Yes, yes — just so!" laughed Roderich Lund. "I am thankful when I can get a few lessons in this miserable part of the town and earn enough to pay my way.— A man may bless his fate now-a-days if he escapes starving in the gutter."

"You give lessons?" Otto asked, for the sake of saying something.

"That is about the mark. What I really am I dare not state in plain terms, for no one will believe me till I have proved it."

"I do not understand."

"To be sure, it sounds rather oracular. I am not strictly speaking a teacher; I give a few lessons to gain my daily bread. My vocation is poetry; I write plays — principally tragedies. Since I have breathed the atmosphere of the

century with intelligent comprehension the tragic seethes in my blood — sombre as lead. At these junctures every man must be prepared sooner or later to be the hero of a tragedy. It is an abject world, my dear Sir. It is possible, of course, to regard it as highly comical; to put it in the pillory and set up for being a Laughing Philosopher; but not unless one is oneself a little above it. I myself am too completely part and parcel of its misery. I write tragedies."

"And where are they acted?" Roderich laughed.

"Acted!" he said bitterly. "To get a play acted — especially a tragedy — the poet of the present day must have interest, connections. Talent alone will not do it. Your *bourgeois* public does not want tragedies; it cannot understand them. All the heart-struggles which lead up to the catastrophe — but you know well enough what the public is now-a-days."

"I am sorry to say that I know nothing of the character of the public or of the state of the theatre."

"You are a student?" asked the poet after a pause.

"I am on the point of taking a place as clerk in the office of Von Düren."

"Von Düren? A. H. Düren the great publishing firm?"

"Just so."

"A publisher!—oh! the publishers!—They are a race by themselves, a species of which I could tell you tales.—*Bourgeois*, thoroughly *bourgeois*; that epitomizes all!"

"What do you mean by *bourgeois?*"

The poet's eyes flashed with a "fine frenzy." In a few words he gave a wildly-indignant explanation; following it up by a fantastic declamation against the Government and Society, with pictures steeped in the extract of fermenting discontent, and dreams in which passionate craving got the upper-hand of justice and logic.

Otto Wellner listened in amazement. The man's manner and language were as those of one possessed, and there was a kind of fascination in his slightly husky voice, in which vehemence and conviction made up for its lack of fulness. Otto, it is true, told himself distinctly: "The man's brain is in a state of unhealthy excitement,"—but it was just that which had such an intoxicating effect.

The clock of a neighboring chapel struck eight.

"I had no idea it was so late," said Lund ris-

ing. "I have taken up too much of your time for a first visit; and have poured out — Heaven knows — more perhaps than you have cared to hear. I hope we may frequently meet. You have eyes like Raphael's angels, your whole manner attracts me strongly; and as you — to judge from your place of residence — are also one of the Pariahs who know not what the Almighty means to do with them, we are *socii malorum* in more senses than one. We poor devils must cling together. By the bye, why do not you come across and join us in the evening? I mean in our virtuous landlady's drawing-room. Joking apart it is a little more comfortable there than in here, in these cupboards which Frau Lersner lets as bedrooms. Pröhle, our opposite neighbor, comes sometimes — a very reputable man; a little homely but none the worse for that. The girls — Fräulein Emma and Fräulein Adele — will not scare you away."

"I hardly know whether — with no invitation. . ."

"Oh! I will be responsible. You have only to come with me."

"Very well," said Otto. He put his letter into a drawer and turned down the lamp. Roderich led the way. The poet knocked twice; the friendly

landlady's voice bid them come in, and they entered a room of some size. Round a table in the middle, where a lamp with a flowered shade shed a circle of light, sat two young girls and a big, broad-shouldered man of about Lund's age. The girls were sewing; the man was twirling a pair of scissors, and looked as if he did not like the intrusion. Frau Lersner herself, at a side-table, was busy preparing supper. She came forward to welcome Otto, shaking hands with him, and then she greeted Roderich. The two damsels and the broad-shouldered man had slowly risen from their seats.

"I am very glad," said Frau Lersner to Wellner, "that you have done us the honor — I was just saying to Herr Pröhle — this gentleman here is Herr Pröhle, he is a type-founder at Von Düren's — 'Herr Pröhle,' I was just saying, 'our new gentleman over there studies too much; he would do better if he did like Herr Lund — of evenings I mean. — That everlasting reading and writing comes to no good, I say; no good at all.'"

The type-founder came up to Otto and said in hearty tones:

"I am sure you're very welcome. I hear that we have the honor of being near neighbors at the shop too. I am only a workman, to be sure, and

you are one of the gentry; but that makes no difference."

And as he spoke he wrung Otto's hand with the force of a vise. Otto made a civil answer, shook and rubbed his fingers a little, and took a seat between Roderich and Miss Adele on a chair that the mother placed for him.

Emma, the daughter, had meanwhile taken up her work again. Otto's eye lingered involuntarily on the light brown hair, simply parted, which lay softly on the white forehead. That forehead had an indescribable look of purity and calmness, and when in answering some question of Roderich's she glanced up for an instant, she showed a pair of hazel eyes, shrewd and bright, and at the same time dreamy, like the depths of a mountain lake, — Otto felt at once as comfortable, as completely at ease as though he had here found a sister and a home.

Adele, Frau Lersner's niece, whom the type-founder addressed as Fräulein Jakoby, was not much like her cousin. Her sparkling eager eyes revealed a certain restlessness and instability, a hungry curiosity, and her full mobile lips seemed to be talking and laughing, even when they spoke no words. Her dark brown hair hung low over her brow, all tossed and untidy as if blown by the

wind. Though Emma was neither solemn nor pensive, by the side of Adele she looked like the incarnation of peaceful good-sense.

The conversation fell at first on commonplace subjects. Pröhle, by a drily-humorous picture of everyday incidents did his best to amuse his excitable neighbor and was rewarded by her gay, mocking laughter.

"But, Herr Pröhle," she exclaimed at last in pathetic accents, "this is the fourth time you have told me the same thing!"

Worthy Herr Pröhle colored, muttered something of "quite by accident," "a mistake," "an oversight," and plunged straightway into another subject in which neither of the other young men took part. Presently Emma Lersner looked up from her stitching.

"Have you been hard at work again, Herr Lund?" she asked with a smile.

"The third act is finished," answered the poet.

"Indeed! and the grand closing scene?"

"Has turned out better than I hoped. I may be satisfied with my day's work. Though what is the use? I know to a certainty that it is sheer waste of time."

"You must not lose heart," said Frau Lersner,

as she spread a flowered napkin on the table. "No one ever dropped from the skies ready made, as you may say; everything must have a beginning."

"My dear Frau Lersner," replied Lund bitterly, "I am now nearly thirty; by this time I might have done something to show. I wish for nothing better than to make a beginning. But Fate will not grant me even the very smallest opening. Not even a suburban theatre. . ."

"And that would do you no good either," said Frau Lersner. "You ought to go at once before the very *élite* of the public."

Roderich shrugged his shoulders.

"I would rather have the suburban public with its honest ignorance than the *élite*, as they think themselves, with their half-knowledge."

"You hear, Fräulein Jakoby," the type-founder threw in.

"And what does it concern me?"

"Well, you have such an extravagant respect and admiration for everything that is genteel!"

"What nonsense! Extravagant respect! I have no respect for anything — not even for your solemn face. You look at me as if you would like to stir poison into my tea."

"I! oh, indeed you quite misunderstand me."

Emma now rose to bring the plates and cups and Otto watched her noiseless activity with increasing pleasure. Her figure was remarkably supple and elastic, but at the same time round and full, and as she took the things from their shelf, bent, stooped, and reached, her grace and shape were displayed to the greatest advantage. Her neatly-fitting dress of black woollen stuff clung so closely and so simply to the shapely young limbs, and her every movement was so unpretentiously easy . . . ! Then how charmingly she laughed when, presently, Pröhle and Adele again began one of those debates in which the honest artisan was certain to come off worst! Her laugh was not so loud or so unrestrained as that of her saucy and bright-eyed cousin, but it was even more hearty and mirthful! That laugh was like the ringing of bell-like flowers — the flowers of her sweet and happy nature . . . !

"Lucinda would laugh like that," thought Otto to himself. She, to be sure, the lady in white, the fairy of the park at Oberhorchheim, was grave and silent — what was there in that silence, that imperturbable calm, that had so bewitched him? Fräulein Emma was pretty, but — but easy self-possession, and imposing dignity, were altogether lacking; and Otto was more than

ever enchained by a fantastical rapture over everything that suggested wealth, splendor, rank, and command.

When Frau Lersner was pouring out tea Pröhle got up, and taking a last impertinence from Adele without attempting a retort he said, while the color mounted to his forehead:

"Well, let us talk sense now. You carry it too far, Fräulein Jakoby. But just to show you that I am not such a bad fellow — wait a bit . . ."

He went out of the room but returned in a minute carrying a large iron pot.

"There," he said. "Fräulein Jakoby declared only yesterday that she never could succeed in roasting chestnuts . . . ."

Adele again burst into a loud, saucy laugh, and the rest laughed no less heartily; for in fact the awkward blushing Hun with the cooking brazier held in both hands was an irresistibly comic figure.

"Well — what is the matter?" stammered Pröhle.

"Nothing, nothing. Only stand there for a minute, in the doorway. Hold the pot higher — higher still. There; now if you could only be photographed!"

"Bah! I should think so! Here — there are

two pounds of them — I roasted them myself, for all the party. Now, do leave off, Fräulein Jakoby! Upon my word you prove the truth of the saying that ingratitude is the world's reward."

"Nay, do not be cross! you are the best of men, that I always declare. Fancy roasting chestnuts for me! It is really quite touching."

"You are quite a spendthrift!" said Frau Lersner.

"Aye?" said Pröhle perfectly radiant. "Well, if type-founding did not pay well enough for that. . ."

"Happily for you it pays better than dramatic poetry!" said Roderich; and Emma sent him a kindly glance.

"Have you tried at the *Stadt theatre?*" she said in an undertone. "With your '*Robespierre*,' I mean."

"No—but it would be perfectly useless, as I work out the hero's character as a fanatic and not as a bloodthirsty monster. . ."

"But if you tried there with your Gracchus? The director is said to be a very amiable and intelligent man."

"So far as that goes, yes. But even he worships the great goddess Success. 'Who is Roderich Lund? I do not know the man. — Take the

rubbish away. I have neither time nor inclination for experiments!' Take my word for it — why, I can hear the amiable and intelligent man say. . ."

"But will you not read it to us—read us what you have finished since last time?" asked Frau Lersner. "You know we take the greatest interest — and that piece about the Ancient Romans particularly. — The Ancient Romans sounds so well you know, so grand and far away — would you?"

"An author craves a public I confess," said Lund knitting his brows, "but still, I do not know whether I dare trouble Herr Wellner. . ."

Otto hastened to say that he should be an attentive and appreciative listener.

"I am sorry to say" — began saucy Miss Adele, after a short silence, "Herr Roderich must excuse my saying so — but I have so much to do this week I must positively be off to work at once. . ." She peeled her last chestnut and wiped her dimpled fingers on her pocket-handkerchief.

"What — so soon?" said Frau Lersner.

"Yes indeed, I am sorry to say. In the autumn there is always more to do; sometimes I can hardly stand it. But the chief requires it."

"I should have thought that he might leave

you your evenings in peace at any rate," cried Pröhle indignantly. "You did not come in till half-past seven and must you be off again at half-past eight! Why there is no end to it."

"Oh come, it is not so bad as that," said Adele. "This evening, for once, we shall go on till eleven—as I said, Herr Lund, I am extremely sorry. . ."

"You don't say so! I tell you what, Fräulein Adele, I believe you would rather stand behind the counter till eleven than listen for twenty minutes to my verses."

"What should make you say so? Why should I object to listen to your Crackus or whatever you call it? But last time I was so dreadfully tired—it was a quarter past ten before. . ."

"Was it?" laughed Roderich.

"It was indeed! Besides Herr Lund you should not mind me. It is so hard not to be sleepy after standing at the counter all day. But now I must be off or Herr Toussaint will be as cross as he was the other day, when I was five minutes late. Emma, give me the door-key. . ."

"We will sit up and let you in," said her aunt.

"So I should think! that I may stand shivering outside for half an hour clapping my hands till

they are sore. You never hear. Besides, there is no counting on Herr Toussaint at this busy time of year; it may be near twelve before I get away. Now — make haste Emma — and help me on with my cloak — it is such a heavy clumsy thing, I ought to have earned a better one by this time. Good-bye, Aunt — good-night, Herr Pröhle — good-night all."

She pulled a colored wax-taper out of her pocket, lighted it, and ran down stairs.

CHAPTER VII.

PRÖHLE watched her as she disappeared, as an enthusiastic traveller might watch the setting of the sun. A feeling of chill anxiety weighed on his heart and was plainly legible in the pained and disappointed expression of his hard-featured face, which looked as if it had been carved out of wood.

It was Thursday, and this was the second time this week that the light of his evening hours had been thus eclipsed. Fräulein Jakoby!—the name meant to him all the balm of spring and flowers of May; light and life and heavenly bliss. He knew, of course, he had always known, that by the

side of this dancing saucy Adele he was a panting and toiling blockhead; he was perfectly convinced that Fräulein Jakoby had only to hold up her little finger to secure a brilliant match, and this left him small hope indeed. But of what avail are wise reflections to counterbalance such a passion.

For many years of his life Fritz Pröhle had not known what it was to care for anything but his daily work and a Sunday holiday in a dancing-booth or a beer-shop. But the socialist epidemic had suddenly filled the air and, industrious, honest, and unprejudiced as he was, he had not escaped the infection. Misled by the influence of this wild ferment he had gradually developed a chronic class-hatred which was very unlike his true nature. Everything adverse or unpleasant that had since befallen him he laid at the door of the citizen classes — the Bourgeoisie. The men who put themselves forward in the great party meetings as the champions of the people stated in plain words that it was the greed of the money-getting classes that kept the laboring millions — individually and collectively — from rolling in riches. The worthy type-founder henceforth strove to give these views practical reality. When, on a Monday morning, he felt sick and idle, he

cursed the sins of the employers; when he was late at work and got a rating, he laid it to the wickedness of the nineteenth century; if he lost at odd and even he saw Europe rushing on its ruin. This candid subjectivity was characteristic of the man; so long as things went well with him Pröhle with all his socialistic maggots was the most harmless creature alive, but it was easy to see that any real disaster would turn him to a fanatic or a madman.

And the whole soul of this singular man — at the very moment when he was most closely ensnared by his virulent class-hatred — had been suddenly flooded by the torrent of love. Fritz Pröhle was in love, and there was an infinite depth of poetry and tenderness in the passion of this stalwart artisan. Those evenings in Lersner's sitting-room! what a glamour of enchantment was there when Adele sat by her adorer's side! How happy he was under all her mockery and teasing!— and now she had vanished!— she was so uncertain, so unaccountable; she always did exactly what he least expected her to do!

It was a very sad thing for the hapless Herr Pröhle.

"Fräulein Jakoby ought not to be left to go about alone . . ." he said at length.

"Dear me, Herr Pröhle . . ." Frau Lersner began.

"I know what you are going to say," he went on. "People who have to work for a living cannot send a companion at their daughters' heels; the girls must learn to take care of themselves. Quite true; but there is a difference between letting such a child as that leave the shop at seven or half past, when the streets are full of people, and allowing her to go back to work at near nine! And even later — it may be near twelve before she comes in she said. Good Heavens! I might have offered to go with her myself — I still have one or two little jobs to do . . ."

"Never worry yourself about her," said Frau Lersner, "she is quite used to it."

"You take it much too easy," Pröhle persisted. "You have only to go late in the evening down the *Louisenstrasse* or the *Brandweg* and you will see the damned young blackguards in their kid gloves, with cigars in their mouths and a cane between the tips of their fingers.— Ah! you may not notice it, but we have an eye on them.— And a girl like that gets spoken to — there, I cannot talk about it — it chokes me . . ."

"You exaggerate, Herr Pröhle."

"On the contrary, I cannot say half enough. Tell us, Fräulein Emma . . ."

The young girl colored slightly.

"It may be so," she said looking up. "But if a girl walks straight on and quickly . . . I believe it is mostly the fault of the girls themselves."

Pröhle seemed to take Emma's remark as a reproof, and this, in his present frame of feeling, after Adele's unexpected departure, he could not brook; he replied with some annoyance:

"You will never persuade me that you never in your life had such an adventure?" Emma glanced up in surprise.

"Well, as you have begun the subject," she said calmly, "I will ask you on your conscience: are the young blackguards in kid gloves — as you express it — the only heroes of such disagreeable adventures? Do not be so unjust!"

"Unjust! I . . ."

"Yes, you. On every possible opportunity you always speak as if truth and honor and every other good quality were only to be found among working-men — as if the higher classes . . ."

"I do not admit that there are any higher classes. All men are equal — and as to truth and honor . . ."

"Bless me, children!" interrupted Frau Lers-

ner, "do not quarrel about such uninteresting things. Herr Lund will read us the rest of his tragedy; and we need not lose our tempers over the working-class and the upper classes. Such things have nothing to do with what you are going to read us — have they, Herr Lund?"

"Why not?" said Roderich, who was a good deal annoyed by Emma's speech and manner.

Fritz Pröhle looked at the clock. Since his hostess had mentioned the tragedy he was divided between his wish to be polite to Roderich and the longings of his uneasy heart. Roderich, who shared his socialist views, was excessively touchy on all that related to his poetry. On the other hand, the type-founder positively could not rest; since he had seen Adele disappear through the doorway a voice had cried to him incessantly: "Run after her — now, at once" — and he heard it still, louder than ever. However, he controlled himself, and reflected that by this time she had gained such a start that he could not possibly overtake her.

Roderich fetched his manuscript and began to read aloud, with strong feeling but with no extravagant emphasis, the act he had finished after long and unwearied labor.

Otto observed that the poet addressed himself

almost exclusively to Emma, as though she were the only critical listener; Pröhle in fact paid absolutely no attention, and Frau Lersner showed more motherly sympathy than intelligent comprehension, while Emma, on the contrary, listened with devout absorption; her eyes sparkled and her slender hands, which, till now, had stitched industriously, lay idle in her lap. This perfectly genuine admiration excited Otto to listen and attend. He heard the first two or there scenes with a certain amount of prejudice, for the confidence with which Roderich put himself forward as a poet by the grace of God was provocative of antipathy; but Otto was honestly astonished to find himself — without any knowledge of the earlier acts of the drama — siezed as if by invisible talons and carried on from scene to scene by the fire and glow of true dramatic power. This was beyond a doubt a creation which might claim to be listened to by the whole nation. When the poet ceased Otto held out his hand to him without a word; Emma drew a deep breath. Only Frau Lersner found a few well-meant words of praise.

Pröhle rose.

"Well, I must go now," he said. "When you have finished the fourth act .... There, I cannot

help wondering how it will all turn out; though, to be sure, as it is a tragedy, Gracchus of course must come to a bad end — there will be a Roman constable or something of the kind — a trial for murder or manslaughter. — Good-night all."

He left the room, went to his own, found his hat and then felt his way slowly down the dark stairs.

Outside was the clear fresh September night; he drew in the air with a deep breath; then he took off his hat and passed his horny fingers through his hair. A smile parted his lips.

"Who knows what may come of it?" he said to himself. "It may be a hint given me by Fate. After all, what should I have gained by it if she had sat there for half an hour yawning behind her little hand while Roderich was reading? For she does hate to listen to reading. — And by ten o'clock it would all have been over. Now, as it is, I can just contrive. . ."

He nodded and started off at an easy pace towards the city rejoicing as he said to himself: "You will meet her — you will see her home . . . ." Further than this he did not go. To say something to her of the passion with which his heart was overflowing, which left him no rest by day or by night — such an idea would have seemed to

him far more rash than to try to seize one of the wheels of the tramway car which dashed by close in front of him, and to stop it with his bare hand.

Twenty minutes walk brought him to the corn market; the illuminated dial of St. George's church showed that it was a quarter past ten, and he turned off down the Louisenstrasse, one of the main arteries of the German metropolis, with the comfortable sense of being in very good time without having too long to wait. The lights were still blazing in some of the shops on each side of the street, and here and there he stopped to look in at a tobacconist's or a pastry-cook's, with his hands in his pockets, whistling the while the time of "Mandolinata," or some other popular air.

Number thirty-three, Bergmann's—the "*Marchand de comestibles*," hams, potted meats, and such delicacies. Here he stood contemplating with total indifference the stuffed boars'-heads and larded fowls which had not unfrequently tempted him to longing. What did he care to-night for these dainties on which the wealthy "batten?" The dreams of his heart were lingering eight doors further down, for it was at number forty-one that Adele Jakoby was saleswoman in the fashionable and famous milliners' shop of Toussaint and Gerold. Pröhle walked on — he

would take a few turns up and down and cautiously peep in. Adele would not see him — and even if she did. He tried to persuade himself that he did not care; but the idea that she might discover him disturbed him greatly. Well, he would make it appear that mere chance had brought him that way. If she came out he would come straight down the street . . . .

Slowly and stealthily, like a bear creeping up to a beehive, he kept close to the houses — this, he reckoned must be number forty-one. In fact, on the carved cornice above the door he saw, in huge gold letters, the words "Toussaint and Gerold." But the shop was shut. The narrow laths of the rolling shutters were fastened down over the front; not a light, not a sound; the house might have been dead.

Pröhle passed his hand over his eyes. . . Perhaps the master had dismissed his employés earlier than Adele had expected? But no; there was but one way to the western suburbs; he must have met Fräulein Jakoby. Suddenly a terrible suspicion flashed on his mind and all the blood in his body rushed back to his heart. He staggered and, with a loud groan, fell for support against the nearest lamp-post — fell so heavily the glass panes rattled. A policeman who was pass-

ing laid his hand on his shoulder and said shortly: "Look here — you had better get home —" and went on his way muttering to himself: "They growl and grumble over the hard times but they can always find plenty to spend on drink!"

Fritz heard the soliloquy, and under other circumstances he would at any risk have rushed on the policeman and have called him sharply to account. But somehow it did not seem worth while now; he was paralyzed. He turned and took the way home shuffling like a broken man.

Presently however he shook himself out of his stunned dismay.

"What a fool I am!" he groaned aloud, clenching his fist and pressing it to his forehead. "Where should she be . . . she is safe at home long ago. I was dreaming, mooning — I must have passed her. Of course she has been at home ever so long." And the strong, stalwart fellow, who a few minutes before had slouched along like an asthmatic old woman, started forward at a brisk pace. He ran as he crossed the corn market and in ten minutes was back at the lodging-house in the Sandgasse. He rushed up the stairs in breathless haste, never heeding that he fell twice in the dark. He reached the top just as Otto and Roderich Lund were leaving the landlady's sitting-

room to go back to their own. "Good Heavens!" cried Frau Lersner, who was standing at her door lamp in hand. "You come tearing up as if a gang of robbers were at your heels. And how scared you look! What on earth is the matter?"

"Nothing — nothing," gasped Fritz. "I . . . only wanted to have the benefit of the light . . ."

He went close up to her and his dim eyes glanced hastily round the sitting-room. There stood Emma, who had just lighted her candle, but he sought in vain for a glimpse of Adele.

"Fräulein Jakoby is gone to bed then?" he said anxiously.

"No — she said she should not be in before eleven."

"Good-night," he said hurriedly, and without another word he went into his room. There he locked himself in and threw himself on his bed. His brain was in a ferment, his eyes burnt in his head.

"What on earth ails him?" said Otto to the poet as they parted.

"Bah, he is in love with the girl, so of course he is furious with Messrs. Toussaint and Gerold. Between ourselves, I believe it is waste of time. If I know the young woman her eyes have long been fixed elsewhere."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE famous publishing firm of A. H. Düren had their extensive premises in the border-land between the fashionable part of the city and the noisy industrial quarter, their frontage occupying almost half of one side of a street. The mere outward aspect of the weather-blackened buildings, simply but massively constructed, gave the beholder an impression of substantial business within; of unostentatious but far-reaching wealth which required no gaudy or boastful announcement to command recognition and respect. The long rows of windows with their stone sills and frames, devoid of shutters or blinds, suggested the ranks of a marching regiment; and even these gave a very inadequate idea of what was to be seen in the three vast court-yards surrounded with buildings that stretched away behind to the southwards. Düren's publishing warehouses were a little town in themselves; they not only comprehended every subsidiary branch of the business — printing, type-founding, and book-binding, with separate shops for wood-engraving and zincography, but the firm

also employed their own mechanics — locksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, machinists, and engineers. There were also a set of rooms devoted to editing and correcting the weekly magazine "Die Glocke," and one for the great Encyclopedia which was daily gaining importance and circulation.

On the first of October, punctually at nine, Otto was standing in the entrance-hall and gave his name to the porter.

"Second Court, Staircase C., First floor, Room seventy," said the man in a mechanical drone.

"Shall I find Herr von Düren there?" asked Otto as the man turned away.

"No — you will find Doctor Wolf."

"Ought not I to present myself first to the chief?"

"It is not customary. The chief does not come much before ten."

"Thanks," said Otto shortly, for the man's manner was annoying.

"Second Court, Staircase C. . ."

"First floor, Room seventy," the porter added.

Otto went through the hall into the first court, where smoking chimneys towered above the surrounding buildings. The morning sun looked lost and dreamy on the grey asphalte pavement, and a

droning hum — the complicated panting, rattling, and stamping of a hundred machines in the various workshops — seemed to be part of the atmosphere. Work had been going on here for a couple of hours already. Otto involuntarily stood still. Often as he had lingered during the last week or two, to gaze at the scene of his future life from the streets in front and behind, he was none the less astonished at the first impression of this great quadrangle, where the windows stood in serried rows and where the inarticulate noise of toiling men and machines was only a sublimer sort of silence. The same inexplicable feeling that had come over him when he followed Lucinda and Camilla up the marble steps at Oberhorchheim fell upon him here, though with a different tinge. There, it was the magical charm of luxurious ease that had held him spellbound; here, it was the sight of what supplied that luxury. What enormous capital must be sunk in these fortress-like buildings, in these acres of machinery and plant, simply to fill the coffers of one lucky and enviable man! How many ceaselessly busy hands, roaring and clattering wheels, and weary brains toiled from morning till night for his behoof! And while golden streams here met and gathered in a rolling flood, a man like Roderich — a man of wonderful

talent — sat in a wretched attic in the Sandgasse, hungry and cold if he gave himself up to his poetical inspirations and neglected the baser tasks that brought him bread.

"It is a strange world!" sighed Otto sadly.

All that Roderich had poured out to him during the few days of their acquaintance, on every pretext and in every key, suddenly came back to him with acute vividness, like the frozen notes in Munchhausen's post-horn. Until now Otto had listened with sceptical ears to the poet's vehement diatribes; he had said to himself that Lund's hyperbolic imagination saw only one side of the facts, and saw that under the light of his excited sensibilities; but here — where the dominion of wealth appealed so directly to his senses — Otto began to believe in Roderich's absolute infallibility. He lost sight of the moderation he had once so implicitly trusted — of the maxims of his good friend Heinzius, who had taught him by precept and example that happiness does not depend on external circumstances; that a poor village schoolmaster in the most forsaken nook in the world may be richer than the great and favored of the earth.

While Otto Wellner stood there almost forgetful of the object for which he had come, a hand was laid on his shoulder from behind. He turned

round and saw the good-humored, quizzical face of Doctor Heinrich Salomon.

"Morning," said the beery bass of the political economist. "Glad to see you again — shall we go in together? It is past nine and you will find enough to do I suspect. The clerk who was leaving naturally let everything go — *Aprcs nous le déluge.* A bad principle—equally bad *in politics.* He was a strange young man that Herr What's-his-name. Well, peace to his ashes! You, I see, are studying topography. — Very imposing, heh? But come on now, so as not to begin by being unpunctual, for that was what brought your predecessor to grief."

Otto followed him.

"So you are to be under Doctor Wolf?" Salomon went on, as they crossed the court. "Well, I wish with all my heart that it had been possible to give you a job on the Encyclopedia—however, lighter literature has its claims and especially 'die Glocke.' —Well, enough of that. Do you know Doctor Wolf?"

"To this moment I have never had the honor. . ." replied Wellner. "I wanted to pay my respects to him last Sunday. . ."

"Well you will find him a highly-cultivated though rather narrow-minded man, but you will

esteem him and like him. — As I say, a man of academic learning but too essentially literary and consequently, on some points, ultra-conservative. Well, enough of that. We part here. Do you see—there to the left from the angle to the middle entrance — all the Encyclopedia — all me, I might almost say if it did not sound like a preposterous assumption of autocratic powers. — If you are interested in the thing perhaps you will look in some day. But you must see the whole establishment and its vast organization; that is an indispensable initiation. There you are, Herr Wellner. Staircase C. Ah! there is the *lupus in fabula* at the window."

He waved his hand to the "ultra-conservative" editor with an expression of comical friendliness, shouted "*au revoir*" to Otto, and disappeared through a doorway, while Otto mounted the stairs to the editor's office.

The editor received him with the affable dignity of a disciple of the classic Greeks. Gentleness, moderation, and harmony were the ruling characteristics of his appearance and manner; he was evidently finely strung and looked as if he dwelt in a dream of the sun of Homer's isle and the soft murmurs of the olive-clothed banks of Ilyssus. He was carefully shaved; his chin, as

smooth and round as a girl's, seemed to bear a promise of perpetual youth and his brown silky moustache was widely unlike the bristly growth which Doctor Salomon was in the habit of soaking so long and so deeply in the foaming beer-glass. His speech was equally different from the jerky volubility of the Encyclopedist. Leopold Wolf spoke simply and distinctly, but always in carefully chosen words and phrases, and with that inimitable accuracy and elegance which is the secret of classical erudition. The words of welcome with which he hailed the new clerk were ἔπεα πτερόεντα — winged words — that soothed the ear with their measured and melifluous courtesy, as melodious as the rhythm of the Odyssey.

Otto found that, as Salomon had warned him, a mountain of papers awaited him, and he set to work with a will to remove this mountain.

The hour for receiving visitors was eleven, and, as the clock struck, Klaus, the office-factotum and messenger, announced a lady. Doctor Wolf nodded, and a tall, fair woman came into the room.

"I beg a thousand pardons," she began with a singularly hurried manner.

"Not at all — to whom have I the honor?"

"My name is Tharow — Marianne Tharow — a widow. I see, Mr. Editor. . ."

"Pray be seated," interrupted Doctor Wolf courteously.

The widow sat down on the leather sofa; then she began again in a doubtful voice:

"The object of my visit may be told in a very few words. You published, about five weeks since, in 'die Glocke' a tale in which the descriptions— how shall I explain myself — in some degree — to some extent. . ."

She raised her handkerchief to her lips and coughed a little, then she went on in almost a whine: "It is this, Mr. Editor — in the fourth chapter of this story a certain Countess Etelka and her receptions are described — what goes on at these receptions I need not enlarge upon now. But this Etelka — I have the best authority for saying it — is meant for me, Sir; abominably caricatured of course — but still like enough for every one to recognize it."

"Indeed! and can you bring any proofs of this assertion."

"Certainly—the most positive proof. My first christian name for instance — not to be sure that which I commonly use — is Adelheid. Now I have learnt on the most trustworthy authority that Etelka is the Hungarian form of Adelheid. And this Etelka behaves in such an outrageous

way that I cannot imagine how any one can treat a defenceless woman —" here the handkerchief went to her eyes—"and a lady whose character is above suspicion.... O it is shameful, quite shameful !"

During this speech Doctor Wolf had fidgeted more and more nervously with his paper-knife.

"My dear Madam," he said interrupting the agitated plaintiff, "I cannot at all understand the cause of your excitement. The heroes and heroines of novels must necessarily have names. You yourself declare that the character and incidents do not point at you — or is there, here and there, some accidental resemblance. . ."

"Your question is really insulting !"

"Well then. . ."

"Yes, but. . ."

"At any rate," said the editor calmly, "your whole hypothesis rests on a complete misapprehension of the circumstances. You might in this way persuade yourself that Goethe had written Faust in order to make game of the original of his Wagner. This is indeed making a mountain of a molehill, or, as we should say building a cathedral to block the view from the attic.

Marianne Tharow sat pensive. She gave vent to a few more complaints, but finally, being driven

into a corner by the editor's polite logic, she could only speak of her "sensitiveness" which made her "see everything in the blackest light," and begging him to preserve the strictest secrecy, she took her leave.

Doctor Wolf saw her to the door with an ironical smile.

"The lady has an evil conscience you see, my dear Herr Wellner," he said, as he came in. "I assure you, the editor of a magazine with a large circulation is the father-confessor of his country."

In the course of the morning Otto had further opportunities of seeing behind the scenes, and what he saw did not contribute to diminish his dissatisfaction with the world in general or with middle-class society.

Klaus next brought in a broad-shouldered man of about fifty evidently in reduced circumstances. He looked like a farmer in debt. Holding his greasy felt-hat with both hands behind his back, he made a clumsy bow, and then announced in a bold unhesitating manner:

"I am Edward Hackenthal, the poet."

"Hackenthal," repeated Wolf very coldly. "To my shame I must confess . . ."

"Edward Hackenthal of Niederwöllstadt in Rheinhessen," the author explained, as he drew up

his round head with its thin sprinkling of hairs and settled it, as it were, on his neck.

"I am very sorry — your name is quite unknown to me."

"Oh! Hackenthal, the writer of 'Elpis.' It can only be through the most extraordinary accident that you fail to have heard of me! But the most impossible things do happen. I myself — would you believe it of a German author?— I myself, for instance, never till three or four years ago . . ."

"Herr Hackenthal, my time is limited; might I beg you to explain to me as briefly as possible what brings you here?"

"As briefly as possible. Your reason is the same as mine. I have here a treatise — about fourteen sheets — on horticulture, seeds, etc. —" and he drew a thick manuscript out of his pocket. — "Might I ask you to favor this important work with some attention?" Doctor Wolf took the bulky roll: on the first page in large letters was written: "Flora. Walks among her children, by Leo Antinous."

"But, my dear Sir, what do you expect?" said the editor suddenly. "This manuscript has already come under our notice and been rejected."

"Quite true," replied Hackenthal, "you re-

turned it to me on the 30th of March last, but without having read it.— But I am not easily offended, respected Sir, and so I offer it you once more for the very moderate sum of two thousand marks." *

"But you must surely know that our magazine only contains short essays, of a few columns . . . Besides, I see . . . your style . . . And it is full of faulty spelling."

"Those could be corrected afterwards."

"Take no further trouble about it, Herr Hackenthal. Your treatise is of no use to us.— Here. —" Hackenthal took back the manuscript with an angry scowl.

"Then you will have nothing to say to it?"

"Nothing."

"Very good. Kestner will give me its weight in gold — it is a very interesting article. I have long been on the very best terms with Kestner and a contributor to his monthly."

"So much the better."

"Meanwhile . . ."

"Well, what is it?"

"You know, Mr. Editor, how irregular the payments are now-a-days, from even the best

* A mark is about 25 cents.

managed magazines — I should be glad — do not misunderstand me . . ."

Doctor Wolf silently took a silver coin out of his purse.

"If this can be of any service to you?"

"But I beg you to believe . . ." stammered Hackenthal. What Doctor Wolf was to believe remained unrevealed. The hapless man quitted the office with the precious manuscript in one hand and the silver piece in the other.

A middle-aged lady was next admitted, a queer figure and a walking comment on the wisdom of a single life — starch and with very short skirts; her extremely plain face with its affected expression was chilled quite blue by the sharp October breeze. To Otto's great surprise Doctor Wolf treated this suspicious-looking personage with marked respect, for Klaus, before opening the door for the author of "Flora" had laid the lady's card on the desk, and the card bore the name of "Eleonora, Baroness von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe."

"I have brought you the article I wrote to you about," began the baroness in a fluty piping voice. "I could not deny myself the pleasure of handing the manuscript to you in person, for I owe you many thanks for your amiable notice of the Christmas entertainment the year before last."

Doctor Wolf made some polite speech and took the manuscript.

"The article is from the pen of one of our younger men of talent," the lady went on. "I may mention this to you, as the editor, but pray let it go no further. It is by Ewald, Kurt Ewald, the gifted novellist and tragic poet. Professor Salomon, to whom I applied twice, was ungallant enough to plead press of work and other excuses."

"You must not bear him any malice for that, Baroness. In Salomon's eyes there are but two branches of human thought: political economy and philosophy."

"Well, I fancy that Doctor Salomon's refusal will not affect its interests with your magazine. The essay is elegantly written and Ewald has been very successful in keeping the true locality out of sight and in setting all that appeals to common humanity in the foreground. Though here and there, he alludes to my humble assistance . . ." Doctor Wolf bowed insinuatingly as if to say: "I know your exquisite delicacy."

"And about when is it likely to appear?" the baroness went on.

"At any rate before Christmas."

"Well, I trust implicitly to your well-known

courtesy. By the way — with regard to correcting the proofs . . ."

"I pledge myself to the most perfect accuracy — I myself, Baroness." Eleonora von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe thanked him and retired with condescending grace.

"There," said the editor, laying the manuscript on Otto's table. "You can look at the thing some time or other. It will want pruning here and there I am afraid. . ."

Otto put aside his work and looked at the roll of cream-laid post, stitched together with red silk and looking more like a packet of returned love-letters than a literary manuscript. He read:

"A festival at the Home for Female Idiots. A picture of our times by K. E. — Motto: Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever receiveth one of the least of these in my name receiveth me."

Then the gentleman with the square-cut fringe was a novelist and tragic poet — and at the same time a reporter of the events of the town as regarding philanthropic matters. The man in the park at Oberhorchheim, whom he had never thought of since, began to be interesting.

The newly-hatched editor's clerk was disturbed in his reflections by the strong Austrian accent of a fair-haired youth with a rather drooping under-

lip, who now came in with a note-book in one hand and a pencil in the other, and addressed himself with a polite bow to the editor-in-chief.

"Permit me, Herr Doctor, to introduce myself. My name is Joseph Ritter Kochansky. I am in correspondence with the 'West-German Post,' a reporter to the 'New German Courier,' the 'Vienna Evening Mail,' the 'North-German Illustrated,' and several other well-known papers at home and abroad. I called to ask you whether by any chance you require anything done for your Magazine — studies in history or something of that kind — on the Spanish Inquisition for instance. — Yes, let us say on the Spanish Inquisition; most appropriate to the times! And it is quite a specialty of mine. . . How many columns now shall we say? What. — Done already? What a pity. Then I might write you something on the development of Nihilism in Russia. . . Most opportune . . . What, done too . . .? Well, wait a minute . . ." and he glanced through his note-book.

"This ought to do: A paper on the old-Catholic movement in Germany; as I am not a member of any religious sect or party I can be absolutely impartial. — Five columns shall we say. — What?"

Doctor Wolf to whom his visitor's versatile readiness was not unknown — for the young man had genuine talent and his name was to be seen in papers of every class — gave him briefly to understand that "Die Glocke" held strictly aloof from religious polemics.

"Well, well," said Kochansky, "I have not hit on the right thing yet. But you are right, such discussions are out of place. Very good; I will reserve that for the 'Revue de Genève'— I write for the 'Revue de Genève,' a highly respectable paper that pays with the greatest promptitude. But cannot you take anything? A chapter now on the Pompadour? Too risky? Perhaps you could make a selection from this list: Chinese weddings.— The fundamental facts of Darwinism.—The influence of Schopenhauer on contemporary literature.— The social position of the Provençal Troubadours.— New Year's customs in the West of Scotland.—On the moral improvement of the press.—The natural medicaments of the Peruvians."

"A brilliant selection of samples!"

"Oh, yes," replied the young man. "These are all more or less suited to a high style of treatment. Here — you see, on page eight — here are subjects for the general public as we say — appeal-

ing more to the feelings: The last day of a solitary soul. What?— or Mother's love? Think of that: Mother's love! That would work up well. Six columns of Mother's love, shall I say; it is a most attractive subject. A young girl, Eulalia I might call her — or if you prefer some other name . . . ?"

"But, Herr Kochansky, you make me quite giddy with your flow of ideas! These sentiments to order . . . You are a most extraordinary man. Write what you like and send it to us, and if we can use it we will."

"Good, very good. Mother's love, then . . ." He wetted his pencil at his lips and made a memorandum on one of the pages of his note-book: "Doctor Wolf, 'Glocke.' Mother's love, six columns, a family article, much sentiment, domestic coloring.'

"There, that is settled. You will be satisfied with my work. One question more if you will permit me. Can you tell me where the 'Haus-blätter' magazine has moved its offices to? Opposite, to the left? That is most convenient; thank you very much. I have had much pleasure.— Sir, I have the honor . . ." The pink and white face with the hanging under-lip expanded into a polite smile, and Joseph Ritter Kochansky, the

contributor to so many important periodicals, quitted the office.

Otto shook his head and plunged once more into the Charity Festival. The mere appearance of the baroness had prejudiced him against her; but here, in black and white, was such fulsome laudation of the "noble Samaritan and benefactress"— brought here, too, by the subject of it all — such a silly trifling with compassion, benevolence, and self-sacrifice, that the effrontery of her proceeding fairly sickened him. He must be a strange man, this Kurt Ewald, to place his pen so grossly at the service of a vain and pretentious old woman — for a charity that could allow itself to be thus trumpeted and glorified could not be genuine.

Otto put down the manuscript very ill-pleased. He had the kind of religious respect for everything "in print" which characterizes the inexperienced and credulous provincial, and here, within less than an hour, the ugliest and seamiest side of literature had come before him — the literary vagabond in all his miserable squalor, the mechanical penny-a-liner who turns out ideas and feelings in a style by the yard and to pattern, then the author of the "puff indirect" and the pharisaical worldling craving notoriety.

When twelve struck the last of the oddities who daily besiege the office of any important periodical had been shown out by Klaus. Doctor Wolf gave a sigh of relief as he spoke.

"Well," he said, "have you looked at that thing?"

Otto replied that he had, and expressed his opinion of it in decided though moderate terms.

"Yes, yes," said the editor. "She is one of those benefactresses to the human race who can never for five minutes forget the all-important I. But after all, what does it matter? The poor devil who earns a gold piece by this sort of thing cares uncommonly little about the motive of the giver."

He turned over the pages.

"On my word! but it is highly colored! positively gorgeous! crimson and purple! 'It was a touching, a soul-stirring sight: The founder and first lady-president of this truly beneficent institution, grand with the diamond drops of those tears of joy that sprang to every eye . . .' My worthy friend Ewald! However, these flowers of extravagant diction can easily be cut out . . ."

At this instant there was a loud rap at the door. It was Doctor Heinrich Salomon who came in with a loud:

"'Morning." He had a proof-sheet in his hand.

"Just look here, my dear Sir," he began, throwing his hat on a chair. "Your reader is a really amazing individual. Just see what an extraordinary oversight in this third slip — here; after 'which was to be proved' there are at least fifteen lines wanting, in which I had dealt critically with the well-known parallel drawn by Heine between Kant and Robespierre . . ."

"I must apologize and ask your forgiveness," said the editor. "In the press of business I neglected to explain . . . Irresistible reasons, circumstances beyond control compelled me to cut out that passage."

"What! to cut out the main point? You leave the tail without a head? But just allow me . . ."

"Your critique was unintelligible to the general public; and besides . . ."

Doctor Salomon crossed his arms.

"My respected colleague," he said solemnly: "You know how highly I esteem you. You are a charming poet and an elegant novelist, but in matters of philosophy I must decline to believe in your competency. I therefore request you most positively, either to restore the suppressed pas-

sage, or to let me withdraw the whole essay. I really cannot allow the highest problems of human existence to be dependent on the dictates of mere literary taste, on the vagaries of a man whose whole reason is probably based on a cacophony of rhythm or some other defect of form and style."

"I assure you," began Wolf, "that my objections were not to the manner but to the matter. . ."

"Then they were retrograde and ultra-conservative in their tendency! Robespierre! Well, the name is a word of fear, no doubt, in German homes. Ah! I see through you, my dear Wolf. National-liberal as you call yourself you are in truth an intellectual protectionist. Well, enough of that! You know the alternative."

"A second Cato! What I have to put up with from these gentlemen! it is out of all conscience. Well, my friend, I will reconsider the matter. I dare not rush on the peril of offending you, for if you should rise to be the first President of United Europe you might take your revenge!"

"I would make you leader of the reactionary opposition," said the editor of the Encyclopedia. Then, turning to Otto, he added: "I warn you, young man; do not let the sweet poison of this polished and form-loving poet sink too deeply into your soul! Look up and out on the great problems

of the century! Work yourself at the mighty loom! Between ourselves it is all a huge farce. The editors sit snugly, correcting and cutting — but the burning questions of politics — domestic political economy, 'What concern is that of ours?' they say in their pharisaical poet's pride! Here — come to this window — look down on that mighty turmoil — the material of the modern polity — and, to speak figuratively, take off your hat to it."

He had taken Otto's hand and led him to the window. Several hundred workmen and women of every class — the men in blouses, smock-frocks or coats, the women in neat cotton gowns or shabby, second-hand finery, bought in some suburban rag-shop, with here and there one more respectably clad — the foremen of the different shops, the readers, the packers, and clerks — were all crossing the asphalte pavement in different directions. Among them slouched Pröhle, the stalwart type-founder, his hat sulkily pulled down over his right ear; he was in no hurry; he eat his frugal midday meal in a little tavern, not five minutes distant from the works, and he had lately been haunted by thoughts too sad to allow him to enjoy the hour's rest.

And what a hubbub and storm of voices, what

a clatter of question and answer, of greetings and laughter! Women's voices were predominant — some fresh and candid, others spoilt by that indefinable shade of tone which betrays degradation and vulgarity. Some of the girls looked up at the window where Salomon and Wellner were standing.

"Those glances are meant for the editor!" observed the Encyclopedist. "I calculate that on an average at least fifty of the women employed on the premises are desperately in love with Wolf."

At this moment another pretty young woman cast a languishing eye at the window as she hurried across the quadrangle; she was not a "hand;" she was evidently only taking this as a short cut. Otto recognized her; it was Fanny, the Von Düren's housemaid. She laughed and paused before she disappeared through the archway.

"Well, what do you think of the scene?" asked Salomon. "It is not a theme for a sonnet or an ode, but good plain prose might find an epic here — more striking perhaps than our worthy friend Lupus' 'Bride of Catania.' But indeed young man, if you are addicted to poetry — I do not know whether you have that particular weakness, but in case you have — wean yourself

from versemaking. Dactyls and Anapests! — Good God! whose mad brain first hit on the grotesque notion? . . . It is a perfect farce! Well, enough of that! At any rate I can vouch with much satisfaction for your interest in the fragment of real life that we have just seen. Yes, what we have looked at from this window is, so to speak, the labor question set in the narrow frame-work of the Von Düren's quadrangle. Nay, nay, my dear Wolf, you need not smile — you, the author of 'the Bride of Catania.' It is the fact. And what I was going to say, Herr Wellner, was that on the first opportunity I will show you the inside of this vast organism. We must study society if we want to form a philosophical idea of it. Give your mind to social science, young man, to political economy, to domestic politics — these are philosophy in practice. Go to public meetings! Listen to the antiquated maunderings of the conservatives, the sweet sentimentalities of the national-liberals, the slippery rhetoric of the social democrats! That is education! That is what you want! Well, well, enough of that! 'Morning," and he disappeared.

"An oddity if ever there was one," thought Otto. "But what he says in his queer genial fashion is well worth listening to. Why should

not I . . . ? Though fate has denied me grace to depict with artistic touches all this busy whirl I may at any rate so far follow my inclinations as to try to roll on with the stream.— The professor is right. I will study this wonderful social scheme with all its diseases and weaknesses — I will prove what I am good for — and whether it is worth while to get into a rage over it, like Pröhle and Roderich."

CHAPTER IX.

A WEEK slipped away. Then, one evening on his return home from the office, Otto found the following note:

"My dear Herr Wellner. Doctor Wolf has given me your address, and he tells me too that you are working well with him. I am glad to hear it — at the same time I had expected to see something of you; but, your new occupations, and perhaps the untried life of a capital, seem to have absorbed you entirely.— Well, I know what a young man's life is. Now, however, I must request you to come to speak with me on Sunday next at eleven o'clock precisely. N. B. Theresien-

strasse, No. 19. I will give you my reasons when we meet. With best regards, yours — Lehrbach."

Otto felt rather ashamed as he read this note. In fact, he was to blame for not having, to this hour, called on his kind protector. He had often thought of doing so, but had always put it off; he could not have said what held him back. Of course he wrote a rather long answer, excusing himself and expressing the warmest gratitude.

On Sunday morning he punctually kept his appointment. He found the lawyer and his young wife at breakfast, Lehrbach looking uncommonly well and happy. The white tie, which seemed an inseparable portion of his individuality, gleamed like new-fallen snow, his shrewd kind round face was a little flushed. He had on a very handsome Bavarian shooting-jacket — his usual dress when at home. By her husband's side, in a cashmere wrapper, sat Lucinda — like a May morning by the side of a bright Autumn evening.

"We are a little late to-day," said Lehrbach, holding out his hand to his young protégé, "as late as you are in the fulfilment of an obvious duty! Nay — you need not wonder at my reproof. In spite of every excuse and allowance it is very neglectful in you to have let a whole fortnight pass without once knocking at our door.

What do you say, Lucinda? We have been at home ever since the twenty-sixth, and to-day is the tenth. However, leaving myself out of the question, I hear that you have even failed to pay your respects to my father-in-law, to whom they are certainly due. This, my dear fellow, is really too bad. How can you hope for promotion if you are not civil to the commander-in-chief?"

Otto repeated what the porter had told him.

"'Pride beseems a Spaniard,'" said Lehrbach, with a glance at Lucinda. "Herr von Düren has, to be sure, certain rules and habits — he does not receive any one but the editors, some of the foremen and head clerks, and a few volunteers; you, as a subordinate, have, strictly speaking, no claims on him as yet. At the same time, in a case like this, the individual in question makes all the difference. You might have ventured in all confidence — for I may go so far as to say that any one recommended by me has a piece on the board . . ."

Lucinda, meanwhile, had handed a cup of tea to their somewhat abashed visitor; her eye involuntarily rested on his grave handsome face which betrayed no sign of assent or resentment as her husband expressed his views.

"The immediate matter in hand is this,"

Lehrbach went on. "I have a notion, though I really do not know why, that a brilliant future lies before you; now, if this future is to work itself out, you must positively see something of the world, of course, I mean the society of the capital and not the world as known to the tourist or the African discoverer — not, again, the bustle of public amusements, of popular meetings, of taverns and gambling hells — you may study all these, too, at your leisure; but the first thing is to get a comprehensive view of the scene of your future life to get the angles rubbed off, and to familiarize yourself with men and minds and the various other problems of life. For this purpose there is no better field than my father-in-law's open and hospitable house."

A malachite clock over the sofa struck a quarter to twelve; Lehrbach rose.

"I will change my coat," he said, pushing aside his cup, "and to put an end to all further delays I will conduct you in person to the Palazzo in the Via del Popolo — so we call the Von Düren's house, in our Academic slang, for he lives in the Pappel-strasse.*— And now I will tell you

* A double pun. *Pappel* is poplar tree — Poplar street. — Via del Popolo is a well-known street in Rome, Popolo being the Italian for people, while the Latin *Populus* means both people and poplar tree.—*Translator.*

why I was in such a hurry to see you. On Thursday next we are to celebrate the betrothal of my sister-in-law to Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz. The entertainment will be the most splendid affair—*non plus ultra*—of the season, and you must positively be present.—So now you know all about it. I will be ready in five minutes."

He left the room. Lucinda bent over the table, playing with a silver knife. Presently she looked up and asked with the easy indifference of a drawing-room acquaintance:

"Then you like your new work?"

"As much as circumstances will allow, *gnädige Frau.*" *

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I have every reason to be grateful for the good fortune that so quickly—I should say . . ." but he paused.

"I see," Lucinda began again, "that your wound is perfectly healed."

"Oh! it was nothing worth mentioning."

"Doctor Lehrbach did not think so; and the surgeon . . ."

He looked enquiringly into her face; he was

* "Gracious lady." This, which is the usual mode of address to a lady of rank or a comparative stranger, is not given every time that it occurs in the German. The tale is essentially one of modern, every-day life, and truth would have been sacrificed to realism if these formalities of speech had been literally preserved.—*Translator.*

surprised to hear her speak of her husband so formally by his title and surname. The formality might, no doubt, be with her unfamiliar visitor; possibly it was merely accidental; but Otto had a vague feeling that it implied a respectful distance, an unconscious recognition of the wide difference in the ages of husband and wife.

"Excuse me!" Lucinda suddenly interrupted herself — "I think I heard my husband call. The servant is rather inefficient . . ."

She went into the adjoining room and Otto heard her go across it and open a second door where she exchanged a few words with Lehrbach.

He had leisure now to look round the comfortable dining-room. It was panelled with oak to about a man's height, and handsomely furnished; there was a fine dark-wood sideboard, very artistically sculptured with game, hunting-trophies, and fruit-pieces; a divan was covered with oriental rugs; the ceiling was coffered and carved — everything else was in keeping and the tall windows were hung with heavy crimson curtains. The malachite clock was the only object that seemed out of place; it looked as though it had wandered without leave from the boudoir. By one of those queer tricks of thought which so often surprise us, it suddenly struck Wellner that

Lucinda — this girl of little over twenty, had the same undefinable air of strangeness in this home as the fragile little clock in this room. He hated himself for the suggestion, but his mind would revert to it. Quite seriously, there was something mysterious about it. Thirty years of disparity! In Otto's judgment a yawning gulf — Lehrbach might quite well have been her father. Even on that former occasion, at Oberhorchheim, the fact had scarcely struck him so forcibly; here the question urged itself upon him: What had brought these two beings together? A passionate attachment? — But the young wife did not give the impression of ever in her life having felt any kind of passion. Some irresistible compulsion? This again seemed out of the question, for she wore no look of patient endurance, no trace of that deep, unutterable sorrow which leaves indelible lines. What then? Doctor Lehrbach was reputed to be enormously rich — but the daughters of Von Düren were far above any absurd suspicion of having been sold against their inclinations for the sake of wealth of which they had enough and to spare. Otto thought it all over in vain; he came to no satisfactory conclusion. But the elegant and lovely creature who had bewitched him, first under the spreading arch of the beech-wood and then, again,

in the park — the incarnation to him of the refined sphere to which she belonged — gained an added charm from the mystery in her life: the chiaro-oscuro of romance.

Otto was standing at the window and gazing out meditatively at the street below, when Lucinda and the doctor came back into the room. Lehrbach had put on his overcoat; in his right hand he held the inseparable companion of his walks— an ebony walking-stick with Jupiter's eagle for its handle — in his left a spotless silk hat. Otto took leave of the lady of the house with particular formality and followed his patron to the door, where, under a portico, a neat brougham was waiting. A pair of thorough-breds dashed out into the roadway and they drove through the lonely park with aristocratic swiftness, reaching the residence of the Von Dürens in about ten minutes.

Notwithstanding his reserve of manner the famous publisher could not conceal his astonishment at this morning-call, in all the forms, from his young clerk, brought by Doctor Lehrbach. Lehrbach, for his part, seemed to find pleasure in his astonishment; but, indeed, there could be no greater contrast than that between the always jolly and talkative lawyer and his father-in-law, who was his junior by three or four years. Beyond

a doubt Georg von Düren, both by nature and in his views of life was a much older man than Lehrbach. His finely cut, rather sallow face showed, it is true, few marks of age, but there was a joyless, anxious pinch at the corners of his mouth — a look as of a solitary soul in the midst of all the lavish splendor of this palatial home. For it was a palace; the architecture was princely and the magnificence of the decoration unique in the city.

When they entered Frau von Düren was with her husband — a quiet, fair woman of about forty, remarkably unpretending in demeanor, and dressed in a style by no means corresponding to the splendor of her habitation. She spoke very little; it seemed as though she had acquired this taciturnity — which could hardly have been natural to her — in the course of many years in the society of her husband. Indeed, if Doctor Lehrbach had not kept up the conversation with his unfailing amiability, Otto Wellner's position would have been awkward to the last degree.

The lawyer presently asked after Camilla. Otto noticed that Camilla's mother sighed, while her father's fixed features brightened up for a moment. But it was Frau von Düren who answered: — Camilla had been very busy that morning. First she had written a number of letters — thanks

for congratulations which had poured in upon her from every point of the compass; then Orloni, the fashionable jeweller, had displayed his treasures that she might select a diadem of brilliants; and now she was engaged with a woman from a famous lace-shop.

"Indeed, my dear friend," added the lady with a forced smile, "a man can have no idea of the revolution that such an event entails in the life of a young girl — particularly when the wedding is to take place with so brief a delay as in this case."

Lehrbach assured her that he understood perfectly and was greatly interested in it, as in everything that concerned the joys and happiness of young people; and then he skilfully led on to the subject of the great entertainment, in such a manner that Herr von Düren could not escape the obvious politeness that was suggested to him. In short, when they rose at the end of a quarter of an hour, Otto held in his hand a formal card of invitation; Lehrbach was as radiant as though he had achieved a master-stroke of diplomatic skill.

As they crossed the hall they met a young girl, followed by a boy carrying a milliner's box with a leather strap. The young woman, evidently not quite a lady, was dressed in good clothes

though not in the best taste, and her eyes had a bold glance from beneath her ornate and rather conspicuous hat. She colored as she passed and Otto recognized Fräulein Adele, his landlady's niece.

He himself could not have said what instinct led him to ignore their acquaintance, here, in the hall of the Von Düren's mansion. Doctor Lehrbach, he felt quite certain, would, under similar circumstances, have bowed to the young lady. Was it the benumbing influence of gentility which made him feel rebellious against anything that could remind him of his own modest position, or was it an involuntary protest against that glance and that audacious hat? Be that as it may, he turned to his companion asking him the first question that occurred to him.

Adele had been no less astonished to see her fellow-lodger here with a gentleman who, by his manner, was evidently intimate and at home in the house. Herr Otto seemed to know what he was about! He had only just been appointed to a very unpretending post, and here he was, in a fine frock-coat, wandering about the stairs and passages of his employer's house! It was a pity there was not a daughter left for him — the poor bookbinder's son from Halldorf might have put in his

claim to the hand of one of the heiresses! . . . and as she made these reflections Adele Jakoby curled her lip a little. Then she shrugged her shoulders as much as to say:

"Well, he is quite right. How a man reaches the goal matters little—the point is that he should reach it."

She paused for a moment, looking back at a fine group in marble that graced the landing above.

"Splendid!" she muttered. "It is fit for a Queen! That simpleton Camilla! How came she I wonder to be hatched in such a gorgeous nest and get the handsomest man for twenty miles round for a husband! It is monstrous!"

Then, turning to the boy, she said aloud: "Look sharp, Alfred, it is nearly twelve, and as to wasting the whole of my Sunday just to please a fine lady—thank you for nothing. Besides, it does not suit my book to be at Herr Toussaint's orders from week's end to week's end.—Now, what are you gaping at? Please to remember that I have forbidden you, once for all, to cast silly-sheep's eyes at me."

"Oh! Miss Adele . . ." was all the lad could find to say; he blushed purple and then humbly fell behind.

Lehrbach and Otto had meanwhile driven off.

"I will put you down at the Hochmarkt," said the lawyer. "I would have asked you to dinner, but unfortunately we are engaged to dine with Herr von Löbbing — you know, the member — but if at any time you have an hour or two to spare . . . quite without ceremony. Every three weeks — always on Tuesdays — you will find a rather large gathering; but we have little meetings too sometimes. We make music or talk — of course you play *Ombre*, but even if you do not . . ."

Otto thanked the worthy friend who heaped so much kindness on him; in a few minutes they reached the spot where the street turned off and led westward. Otto got out, bowed politely to the owner of the carriage as it rolled away, and was starting on his walk at a brisk pace, along the crowded foot-way, when he caught sight of a well-dressed man who seemed much surprised to see him there. This man — who might be nearly sixty — had turned round, close to the place where Lehrbach's carriage had pulled up, with his back to a tobacconist's shop, and seemed to have been a spectator of Otto's parting from the lawyer. Now, when he saw the young man's face, he looked so excessively astonished, that Wellner

himself was struck and looked enquiringly at the stranger. He tried to remember whether he had ever seen him before; but his memory, which was a good one, positively answered: No.

"Bah!" thought he as he walked on: "Some mistake! The man looks like an old gaby—perhaps I am so unlucky as to be very like the tailor to whom he owes a year's bill." And he went on down the Louisenstrasse.

It was a lovely day, rather cool, but so clear and sunny that its brightness was reflected in every face. The whole street had a holiday aspect; gay dresses, such as are commonly seen only in the early days of spring, were thickly sprinkled among the crowd, and open carriages were numerous. As Otto was crossing the next side street he recognized a florid, fair woman, lounging with pretentious ease in a *coupé* lined with scarlet; this was the highly sensitive widow, Marianne Tharow, who had remonstrated so earnestly with the editor on the attributes of the Countess Etelka. Otto involuntarily raised his hat and the lady seemed extravagantly touched by this act of politeness. Her face beamed, and she returned the civility with an expression of radiant satisfaction. This little performance attracted the attention of a lady who was with her and

whose face was hidden from Otto behind a large silk fan; she turned to look at him.

Otto thought he must be dreaming. Sitting by the widow—whose theatrical elegance impressed even the young provincial as meretricious—sat the fair-haired waitress from the Golden Anchor at Gernsheim! But how altered—her eyes, formerly downcast, were as radiant as the sunshine, and there was an eager quiver in her delicate nostrils as though the atmosphere of the great city had an intoxicating effect on her senses. She was beautifully dressed, without any of the overloaded and vulgar costliness which stamped Marianne's violet velvet costume; on the contrary, all was simple, tasteful, and becoming. In short she looked a perfect lady. Seeing them thus, side by side, Frau Tharow might have been taken for a governess who had blown into a duenna, in charge of a pupil past the age of lessons.

A marvellous transformation!

Before Otto had recovered from his surprise the carriage, with its belaced coachman and shiny-haired groom, was lost in the chaos of vehicles.

The clocks were striking one. Frau Lersner gave an early dinner on Sundays, and Otto hurried on, for the dame loved punctuality; his

thoughts were still in a state of bewilderment when he reached his lodgings.

"Herr Wellner," cried a voice behind him as he reached the door. It was Pröhle, coming out of a neighboring beer-shop.

"Wait a minute, Herr Wellner," he roared once more. "We will go in together; I have something to say to you."

But Otto did not heed him: about a hundred yards away he again saw the dandified figure of the elderly man who had stared so much at seeing him get out of the lawyer's carriage. When he perceived that Otto had recognized him he hastily turned into the next doorway.

"What on earth is the meaning of this?" thought Otto, and he absently shook hands with the type-founder.

"Do you know what?" he said as Pröhle led him into the house with homely familiarity, "I really believe that my intimacy with you and Lund has already laid me open to suspicions of conspiracy!"

"How so?"

"Oh, I am only joking. But all the way from the Louisenstrasse I have been followed by a man who, if he is neither a pick-pocket nor a detective, is a very mysterious stranger. Just step behind

the door, will you — so; now, I will wager anything that he will be out in two minutes. Or wait — better still — we will go to the staircase window above."

They went up to the first floor and looked over the window blind. In fact, within a few seconds, the man reappeared, carrying an overcoat on his arm and a light stick in his hand; he walked slowly past the house looking at it again and again, and taking careful note of the number.

"That's queer," observed Pröhle.

"Very queer — that is just what I say. Do you happen to know the man?"

"How should I. The likes of me have no business with that sort of gentry."

"That is a pity!"

"Perhaps Fräulein Jakoby knows him," said the type-founder. "She knows everybody — the first families as they say . . ."

"Indeed."

"In the way of business of course; and because she takes an interest in everything handsome and rich. A princess was spoilt in the making of her . . ."

"Well, as she is not here we must give it up. After all, perhaps the man has taken a fancy to me — perhaps he admires the pattern of my neck-

tie! Fops like him, who cumber God's earth, have wonderful fancies. — Come along; I am desperately hungry."

And they went up-stairs.

CHAPTER X.

THE stranger, meanwhile, had walked a few hundred yards further westwards, followed by the wondering gaze of the women who stood here and there in the doorways, dressed in their Sunday clothes, and crowded round by clinging little ones. The whole neighborhood of the Sandgasse was so exclusively inhabited by poor folks that such a graceful apparition, in his shining top-hat, tightly-fitting blue cloth coat and well-cut trousers, could not fail to excite attention. He presently stood still, and passed his hand over the smooth black hair that contrasted so strangely with his pinched features, while some muttered observation fell from his thin aristocratic lips. Then he nodded as though he had come to a definite resolution. With a slight shiver he buttoned his coat to the throat and turned on his heel. Was it the keen north-west wind that had chilled him? Or was it that he shuddered as he remembered the strange

impression that had weighed on him all the way hither from the Louisenstrasse? Now, at any rate, he seemed to have settled the matter. He struck his breast, with a military swagger, so that the starched armor of his shirt-front crackled slightly, twirled his gold-topped cane in his fingers for a minute, and then stepped out at the short brisk pace which is characteristic of an elderly and methodical man. The further he got from the house number 70, the more freely and carelessly he looked about him. He now found leisure to glance at the workmen's pretty wives, with the eye of a connoisseur in youth and beauty — a pleasure which he could indulge in out here in the suburb with perfect freedom, since he was certain that none of his wide circle of acquaintance would meet him and laugh at the democratic development of his taste. He even leered knowingly in at the windows.

He had just cast an eye into the flower-decked casement of a ground-floor room, where a handsome young woman was sitting with a child on her knee, when his arm, over which he still was carrying his overcoat, hit a young girl who was hurrying down the street without looking very carefully where she was going.

"I beg your pardon!" he said in some con-

fusion. "Ah! what a happy accident! It is you, young lady! I have looked out for you for weeks, but in vain."

It was Adele Jakoby, on her way home. Her pretty, saucy face, which bore traces of annoyance, put on a pleasanter expression at the old dandy's address. Her eyes lighted up, but her lips curled rather disdainfully.

"I must beg you not to keep me," she said in low tones. "It is dinner-time, and I am very late already."

"Very late! Gracious Powers! Is it then of such vital importance that you should be present when the Sunday mess of pottage is ladled out? As I told you last time, I have very important business to discuss with you — yes, indeed, you sweet little rogue, very serious and important business, and I will not allow you now . . ."

"But I implore you . . ." said Adele.

"Well, if you positively must go home, I will go with you. Then I shall know where you live — stony-hearted fair one!"

"On no consideration whatever. That would be a mess indeed; here, in the Sandgasse, where everyone knows me . . ."

"But you must positively give me the opportunity — I thought you knew by this time whom

you have to deal with. I am not one of those volatile profligates who do not reckon on the weight or result of their words and actions; I mean honestly well by you . . . Oh! you may shrug your shoulders; the truth remains the truth all the same.— Now, leave your home folks to swallow their soup without you, and give me just a quarter of an hour! There — you see that pastry-cook's — a glass of Malaga before dinner will do you all the good in the world, and Mamma will keep a slice of the joint for you."

"But I have no Mamma — and I don't care for your Malaga."

"Well, well, Sherry then — or a cup of chocolate — only come along — the woman in there is beginning to wonder, and it is you who are attracting attention to our meeting! I should be distressed, Fräulein Helene — that is your name, I think. Come, take my arm."

"What are you dreaming of," said Adele. "Arm in arm with a gentleman whom I never met but once before!" and she protested in virtuous earnest, though she quietly walked on by the side of the stranger who now crossed the street.

"Well then, Fräulein Helene . . ."

"Adele is my name."

"A thousand pardons — my memory is so

bad!— Well then, Fräulein Adele, the first thing I have to say to you is that, ever since the evening when you so mysteriously vanished, I have every day gone down the Marienstrasse at the same hour — but in vain. You must have been living like a nun."

"Not I," laughed the girl. "The fact is that I have no business to take me in that direction. Besides, do you for a moment suppose that I believed all your fine speeches?"

"By all that is holy, dear Adele . . ."

"Bah! Have done with protestations!" she interrupted sharply. "Do you think they are new, or a treat to me? Once for all, what is the wonderful secret you were so full of when we last met."

"You shall know that as soon as we are within four walls."

He opened the glass door of the pastry-cook's shop and held it with a gallant bow for Adele to pass in. The heedless girl rustled past him — he followed her, and the door closed with a rattle. They went through the shop to a side room where only one customer was sitting at the marble table. The shop was not in fact much frequented, and at this hour might as well have closed, for business was slack till about three in the afternoon.

The man who sat in the remotest corner with a cup of coffee on the table between his elbows, muttering over the columns of a dirty newspaper, might perhaps have chosen it for its loneliness; for his face was morosely misanthropical and a look of malicious cunning lurked in the lines of his lips and straw-colored stubbly moustache.

Ephraim Peltzer — for it was he — had gone through various unpleasant experiences since the outrageous scene in the wood of Oberhorchheim. After spending his rage at his dismissal from the manufactory at Gernsheim in his fling at Otto's head, he had indulged in rosy dreams of his future career. But the Metropolis which his conceit had made him believe would be, for him, an El-Dorado, had as yet proved a barren desert. He had sought work in vain; his line of industry was full to overflowing. The promises of which the socialist agitator Leopold Meynert had been so lavish — promises of free and ready help from all the "associates" — had proved for the most part fallacious. Ephraim Peltzer's small savings were melting with ominous rapidity. Day after day he studied the advertisements in the papers, quite willing to serve as a salesman or messenger, but in vain.

So here he sat brooding — hardly caring to

copy out the few addresses the paper contained—when Adele and her strange companion seated themselves at the other end of the room. He eyed them with disfavor; he knew enough of the world to see at once that they were not father and daughter. He recognized in the gentleman, with his carefully-waxed moustache and shining kid gloves, the aristocratic vulture, though the girl hardly answered to epithet of the dove. The fury of the working-man who sees the rich treating a woman of inferior rank as a mere toy was streaked by a dull flame of jealousy; for Peltzer thought that he had not for many a day, seen so bewitching a creature. That those cherry lips should bestow a smile on that old rake, when "the likes of him" would probably have sued and toiled for it in vain, he felt as a personal injury, an affront which, in his present savage and humbled mood, rubbed him greatly against the grain. As often happens, a trifling incident led to events that altered the course of a whole life. The sparkling sherry in the little cut glasses were in Peltzer's eyes the drops that made his cup of bitterness overflow. A voice seemed suddenly to say to him: "You fool! Why it might all be yours if only you had the pluck . . ."

His memory hastily reminded him of all the

opportunities when, as he believed, he might have got a start in the world if it had not been for some personal prejudice and spite: He had been too honest — if only he had grabbed and held, things would have been very different; by this time he might have been a made man and have laughed at that gawky ass! It was maddening,— a curse on Socialism! What had it done for him? It had thrown him on his beam-ends after he had been fool enough to build a ladder for others to rise by, and now he might look in vain for anyone to pick him up again.

There he sat, biting his nails and hardly knowing whether the burning misery that gnawed at his vitals were hunger or rage. The stranger meanwhile was talking to Adele Jakoby in an undertone.

"You see, my dear," he began, as he drew off his gloves, "I am an artist — devoted to art. So you cannot be surprised that I should pursue a young lady so perfectly charming as yourself with a certain degree of persistency . . ."

"Indeed," said Adele. "An artist? And what is the art you are devoted to? Drinking champagne? Eating truffles? An artist? — a very happy thought, I must say — and most amusing!"

"But really, my dear, I do not know what right you have . . . Do you know me?"

"Of course I do."

"But you said the other day . . ."

"The other day it is true I had not the honor, Herr von Sunthelm; but since then I have watched you three or four times . . . in the evening, you know, in the Louisenstrasse when you are hanging about the shop-windows with that elegant cane in your hand — and once, as it happened, I had a friend with me — a young lady to whom you told the same story about being an artist.— Well, she knows you, you see."

"Not so loud," said her companion, pressing a lean finger to her pouting lips. "People might misunderstand . . . my name, in fact, is Sunthelm — Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe. But that does not disprove my former statement . ."

"We need not quarrel over it," said Adele emptying her glass. "You are an artist; but you are something else besides. You are a bored old gentleman who likes a little gay society. You have taken it into your head that the forewomen and sewing-girls of a milliner's shop are more amusing to talk to than the fine ladies in your drawing-rooms, and so you condescend to notice my insignificant person. But you have no secret

to tell me — that I knew from the first; only I thought you were minded just to let me see what kind Grandpapa would treat me to — so here I am. But now, my lord artist, I will make myself scarce. Thanks for the sherry! I must positively get home."

There was such an engaging pertness in her way of saying it, her face was so radiant with youth and audacity, her voice had such a happy ring, that the baron felt a volcanic warmth in the burnt-out crater of his passions which reminded him of their earlier fires.

"But, Fräulein Adele," he said detaining her firmly, "I positively will not let you go. We must meet again — promise me — and I must know your name, and where you live . . "

"No, no, there is no need for that," laughed the girl. "Unless you wish to call on the family. My aunt would stare to see such an aristocratic grandpapa climbing up four flights of stairs."

"A grandpapa! But you will have your joke. Now, between ourselves, how old do you think I am!"

"Between sixty and seventy."

"Ninety," said Anastasius with rather forced irony. "Seriously, Fräulein Adele, you are

strong in compliments! But now — I entreat you — just five minutes. What is your name?"

"Mercy on me, it cannot interest you."

"It interests me excessively. I solemnly implore you . . ."

"My name is Adele Jakoby. Now, what are you the wiser? My aunt will not ask you to tea any the more for that."

"Your aunt? You live with your aunt? Where does she reside, pray?"

"Hereabouts — not far off."

"The street, the number?"

"Sandgasse, number seventy."

"What!" cried the baron, startled.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing," muttered the baron; but his gay humor had suddenly vanished; his interest in the pretty milliner was supplanted by a more serious and less romantic consideration: Seventy; that was the number that he had only just now registered in his memory after so much deliberation. He longed to go at once to the point; to ask the plain question: whether, in the same house, there was a young man lodging — a tall young man, named Otto — to the best of his belief Otto Thiemssen; what the young man was

doing, and in what relation he stood to Doctor Lehrbach, Herr von Düren's son-in-law. But his worldly wisdom warned him in time that such a string of eager enquiries would puzzle the girl and put her on her guard. So he carried on the part of a gallant lover — which had indeed been genuine till within a few minutes — with an artistic infusion of romance. He ascribed all his curiosity to his interest in Adele, pretending to think of Otto as a possible rival whose character and habits he tried to investigate under the pretext of jealousy. Adele, whose tongue was quickened by the sherry, saved him the trouble of asking many questions; she told him, with delightful candor, all about her aunt, Emma, Roderich and his unfinished tragedy, Pröhle and his bearish devotion, and finally about Otto Wellner who had come from Halldorf and had only lodged in the house for the last few weeks.

"Then it is Wellner, not Thiemssen," thought the gentleman with a sigh of relief; in fact, he thought he had heard the broad-shouldered fellow who had addressed the young man at the doorway say Wellner — not Thiemssen. But then again, he remembered Otto as he had seen him get out of the carriage and walk on, only a yard or two in front of him. The evidence of his ap-

pearance was stronger than the reassuring information as to his name.

He had nothing immediately to fear, to be sure; everything was so carefully arranged, so admirably planned . . . Nevertheless, if it were *he*, the presence of this man, who was, besides, on such intimate terms with Doctor Lehrbach, must be a constant weight on the baron's soul . . . for who could tell what tricks Fate might choose to play?

Molbeck, formerly his valet, had, twenty years since, acquired the intelligence that Thiemssen, who — as he was credibly informed — had till then carried on business as a brewer at St. Louis in the United States, had suddenly quitted that city, explaining that his wife could not live in the climate of the Mississippi Valley. From that time all trace of him had been lost. It seemed probable, however, that he was since dead, for he had been an ailing man, and even then was nearly fifty. But no one knew for certain, and Molbeck, a genius in the arts of intrigue and the only person who might perhaps have succeeded in solving the mystery — if the baron had required him to do so — had been sleeping for more than thirteen years under a tall marble cross with the inscription: "To the memory of a faithful servant and a

noble and unselfish heart." — If now quite unexpectedly — by some extraordinary chance — if this Thiemssen were still living and were to die in delirium as Molbeck had died . . . or even if Molbeck's widow were to happen to see this Otto, and be as much startled by his extraordinary resemblance as the baron himself had been?

This widow, in fact, was an incubus on the baron's mind, a hideous nightmare who, from time to time, cost him hours of terrible anxiety. She gave no sign, to be sure, and was a peaceable, pious, honest widow, who even now, after thirteen years, shed tears of regret whenever she spoke of her husband; the guilty man's conscience was roused to torment without any external impulsion; but one important cause of his recurring qualms was intimately connected with Frau Therese Molbeck. Shortly after Molbeck's death the baron had received a note by post with no signature at the end.

"May God forgive you," it said, "as He forgave the wretched Heribert Molbeck, for he is gone to his grave with a penitent and contrite heart. God rejoiceth over the sinner that repenteth; do you then also repent, for the Angel of Death approaches swiftly, and the vengeance of the Lord, though delayed, is sure."

Sunthelm had at once suspected Frau Therese Molbeck of the authorship of this effusion, which cost him many weeks of sleepless nights; and after much cogitation and cautious enquiry he became certain of this fact. Till this hour the terrible woman had not spoken, often as the baron had felt gruesome presentiments of the worst; but now — now she would emerge from her obscurity. She had been silent out of respect for her deceased husband whom she still idolized, and whose crime she believed to have been expiated by his death-bed repentance, and also because she dreaded the idea of a contest with an aristocratic and influential man who might easily turn the tables on her and ruin her character by declaring her accusation was false. In point of fact this was just what Anastasius, in his calmer moments, was prepared to do. The mere word of this very excited person, who was known to suffer from religious hysteria, would be a feather-weight in the scale against the prestige and importance of a Von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe, and she had no evidence to support her assertions. Besides, everything agreed so perfectly: the doctor's evidence, the certificate of death, all the circumstances . . . No, all was safe; Sunthelm never felt a qualm excepting when a secret presentiment, a delirious

dread of being followed up came over him — and these were less frequent as years went on . . . But now he could not help saying to himself: "If Frau Molbeck should see this Otto, and, like me thinks she recognizes him — who knows to what some devil may not drive her!" The mere possibility seemed to sear his soul, and everything that concerned Otto had a painful interest for him.

At any rate he must acquire the certainty whether this Otto could be the man he took him for, or whether the resemblance were a mere spiteful freak of nature; but he could only achieve this by gaining the fullest information as to Otto's present life and past history. An intimacy with Adele would evidently be an invaluable means to that end; thus it might be possible to combine business with pleasure.

"Well, but quite seriously . . ." said Adele pushing back her chair. "I do not know how I can account to the others for my long absence. And that stupid sherry — it gets into one's head so that one can even mistake such a — such a stupid, old — artist, for an amiable young man! Yes indeed, Herr von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe, you really look thirty years younger than you did just now; you have quite pretty pink cheeks — a little hollow, but very nice. Well, give my duty to

your lady-wife — you are married, I know — poor young man, and what then? Retribution for this sherry will soon overtake you!"

"Sweet little rogue!" murmured Anastasius, still feeling uncomfortable. "Then we shall meet again?"

"Certainly, for aught I mind. But let my hand alone, that everlasting patting and squeezing makes me nervous.— That stupid sherry. . .!"

"Where can we meet?"

"At the corner of the Mauerstrasse; I pass there every evening. But I warn you, I shall not wait one second."

"Very well, *au revoir* then. I will not offer to take you home — as a precaution . . ."

"No, you stop here and finish the bottle; it will make your cheeks pinker still."

She laughed and went out.

"What a horrible man!" she said to herself. "An old rip like that, and so desperately in love! But I cannot think . . . .What are such creatures for in the world, unless Providence has sent them on purpose to buy a pretty necklace now and then or an opera-box for a poor little thing like me? But they are dull old bones, all the lot of them, and Herr Ewald is no more likely to marry me than Anastasius von Sunthelm. Now a fellow like

Pröhle — I might eat him out of house and home. —But thank you for nothing! To settle down in a hole not half as large as my aunt's room and work from morning till night like a galley-slave .... Let those do it that like it." And humming a gay tune as she went, she hurried down the next turning to the lodging-house in the Sandgasse.

Baron von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe sat sunk in the strangest reflections. The strong wine, of which he had drunk a considerable quantity during his interview with Adele Jakoby, did not, it is true, go to his head as it had to that of his pert little companion, but it threw a cloud of melancholy over his mood. Anastasius had reached the point where self-pity plays strange tricks with the fancy. He excused himself, he accused himself, he pitied himself. After all, what had he done that was so dreadful? In the eyes of the world, to be sure — according to the letter of the law. — But the law judged superficially and brutally, from mere external circumstances; it had no knowledge of psychology; it could not do justice to the baron's transcendental needs — his appreciation of the pleasures of life, his cultivated sense of the charms of luxury, his æsthetic aversion for the coarse details of a plebeian existence. Nay, had law, in its ruthlessness any conception

of hard necessity or of the natural rights of man?

Herr von Sunthelm poured out the rest of the sherry and gazed absently into the clear red-gold. He did not notice a stout man — a master butcher or baker perhaps — whose rotund person was emphasized by a thick watch-chain, who now came into the room in hob-nailed shoes, with a heavy tread that shook the floor, and seated himself on one of the little cane chairs with a groaning sigh that made the joints creak. It was not till a quarter of an hour later, when this man was complaining in no measured terms of the woman at the counter for having refused to give him a light for his cigar, that Anastasius looked up. Then he remembered that it was time to go home, as he was expecting friends to dinner. So he went into the front shop and paid his reckoning, while the newcomer, still growling, took up the last number of the "Glocke."

When he got outside he stood still a minute or two; he drew a deep breath, meditatively, as though he could thus exhale, once for all, the oppression that had closed in upon him during his anxious reverie. Then he slowly walked past the shop-windows, reading, without much heeding, the six or eight announcements that orna-

mented them: "Pastry-cook," "Luncheon-room," "Bouillon fresh daily."—But on reaching the last window he started; peeping between the wires of the blind he saw Ephraim Peltzer, who had stolen up behind the stout customer, softly take a pocket-book out of the breast pocket of the latter's over-coat. The instant after, Sunthelm heard the rascal's steps behind him, and he, like Anastasius himself, went off towards the heart of the city.

The baron's first impulse was to call for the police. But he thought better of it. So soon after his unwished-for meeting with Otto—who called himself Wellner, but whose name perhaps was Thiemssen—it struck him that it might be very convenient to have the whip-hand of so unscrupulous, and at the same time so neat-handed and cool-headed a man as this ruffianly workman. All he had to do, as the rascal had soon overtaken him, was to keep this new object of interest in view, as closely as, an hour or two since, he had watched the young man from number 70 in the Sandgasse; to discover the thief's lodging, and to be certain of his identity. At a short distance further stood a drosky for hire; the baron got in and promised the driver a handsome gratuity if he kept the man in sight.

In a quarter of an hour Anastasius von Sunt-

helm-Hiddensöe was deposited at the door of a squalid tavern, into which he followed Peltzer with no small disgust. At the foot of the stairs stood a smart-looking fellow just going out, and in the very act of polishing up the leather peak of his cap. This was the landlady's son, and in reply to the baron's questions he was ready with the fullest information; he did not seem to entertain a very high opinion of the individual in question. Peltzer was a man always seeking a quarrel; he was in debt for his week's lodging two marks thirty, and for breakfasts sixty pfennige;* an amount of arrears never before heard of since Frau Wilczek had kept her inn. Herr von Sunthelm took out his purse.

"Here, my boy," he said holding out a twenty-mark piece with his very finger tips. "This is to square the arrears, and you may keep the rest. I take a particular interest in this Herr Peltzer; try to find out, and let me know, where he goes if he should happen to leave these quarters. I will call some time and enquire. But above everything keep your tongue quiet.— Do you understand?"

"Do I understand!" grinned the lad weighing the gold piece in the palm of his hand.

* Altogether nearly a dollar.

"So much the better for you."

"Good-day, my lord," said the boy with a comically loutish bow, as Sunthelm went out into the street. "And many thanks to your excellency!"

Anastasius smiled, and walked up the street with his most aristocratic air to the corner where the hackney-carriage was waiting.

And so he got home, tired out and still suffering from the oppressive after-taste of his dismal meditations, though somewhat encouraged by his little success in the matter of Ephraim Peltzer.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a week after the events just related. Otto Wellner had a series of tiresome tasks before him, to be finished by six o'clock, among them the revision of the panegyric on the universal and bountiful liberality of the Baroness Eleonora von Sunthelm, and the compilation of a biographical notice which did not in the least command his sympathies. A painstaking clerk, whose business it was to draw up these biographies, had suddenly been taken ill, and the article was needed at once. When Otto, with pain and labor, had got through

the task he had a short skirmish with the editor-in-chief who objected to the cool and occasionally ironical tone of the paper.

Otto replied with modest decision that he had moderated the expression of his own views as far as possible, but that he could not call a thing white when he saw it black.

Doctor Wolf considered this remark as out of place, since Herr Otto Wellner was in no way pledged as representing an opinion but was merely an instrument — a pen, so to speak — in the editor's hands. Otto retorted, and the result of this debate was a slight unpleasantness scarcely apparent in a man so habitually cool and dignified as Dr. Wolf, but not the less painfully perceptible to his assistant. Thus it happened that Otto reached home in anything rather than a complacent frame of mind, quite unconscious that the fit of irritability under which he had, in fact, been laboring for some few days, had any deeper source.

The impression made upon him by the home life of the Lehrbachs and the Von Dürens had left a reaction like that of intense light on the eyes; the mental retina had been over-stimulated, and it reproduced a hundred scenes and figures which were as persistent as the image of the sun — and the central object of them all was the face

of the beautiful Lucinda. Yes, he was out of heart — with the world, with himself, with what he wished and with what he was. The whole shifting kaleidoscope of life was odious, aimless, incoherent. There was Herr von Düren rolling in his millions and incapable of a smile; Lucinda in the sweet bloom of womanhood almost as wordless as her inscrutable father; Doctor Lehrbach at her side — content, to be sure, and flourishing, but hardly less proud and happy, as it seemed, of his thorough-bred horses and Persian carpets than of his incomparable wife. . . And he, Otto himself — whose liking for the worthy man was no less genuine than his gratitude — he was condemned in some mysterious manner to puzzle himself, half involuntarily, over all these misfitted lives, to discover from the petty and minute details which he had been able to observe all that seemed to prove a radical incompatibility of minds and characters.

Added to all this, now came the discrepancy, so often and so keenly felt, between the narrowness of his means and the requirements of the brilliant circle into which Doctor Lehrbach had so abruptly thrust him, as though it were a matter of course that a man of education must be rolling in gold! In short, a crude discord jarred unceasingly on his temperament, and he was more than

ever inclined to seek a sort of counterpoise in the misanthropic ideas instilled by Roderich Lund. As he climbed the stairs of the high dark lodging-house he felt a positive yearning towards the author of 'Gracchus'; he longed to hear the voice which could denounce with sonorous vigor the crimes of mankind, unfold the wildest schemes with tragic vehemence, and plot conspiracies to wreck the very foundations of society.

He was quite abashed when, on reaching the corridor, the poet met him, no longer as a declaiming Cataline, but like a young girl who has received a missive from her lover. His face beamed with blissful excitement and he held the lamp in one hand and a sheet of rose-tinted paper in the other.

"At last," he exclaimed flourishing the note in the air. "The ice is broken! My Muse is beginning to feel her wings. God knows how it has come about, but so it is. Come, my dear fellow, and you shall be the first to enjoy the privilege of seeing this precious document — destined to mark an epoch in the history of literature."

Otto, with an astonished enquiry, went into the room and sat down; Roderich planted himself in front of him and held the note close under his nose.

"Sweet — is it not?" he said laughing. "Oriental oil of roses — sold for its weight in gold! Ha, ha — our epicureans know how to live! — Now, guess from whom it comes."

"How can I guess! From some hitherto silent adorer, a Baroness, a Princess . . . ."

"Not a bit of it! How little you know the female heart. If I had been successful indeed, if I were the hero of a 'run' of a hundred nights, then I daresay I should have such notes by the dozen — but as it is — and I am not such a dashing lady-killer that my personal advantages . . . . No. Quintus Horatius Flaccus has at length found a Maecenas — a statement to be taken with a grain of salt, of course, for Roderich Lund could never be such a mean lickspittle as the classic loafer of the Via Sacra — never, not if Maecenas were, the descendant of a god instead of a king! But the man does not ask it; the whole tone of his letter sufficiently proves that."

"I congratulate you; and who is this exalted personage?"

"I will not have the man laughed at! People with such a genuine love of art and artists are rare birds in the fumes of this smoky flue.—There, read it; Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe is the name of the patron who holds out his hand to

me. It is an old and honored race. As you know I care deuced little for a baron's title — at the same time the nobility, with all their absurdities, are preferable a thousand times over to your confounded money-grubbers who only worship almighty cash. But read for yourself!"

Otto had unfolded the rose-scented note. In truth — as he could not deny, in spite of the prejudice that the recollection of the Baroness Eleonora had roused in his mind at the name of Sunthelm-Hiddensöe — it contained proposals which left nothing to be desired on the score of delicacy. Baron Anastasius described himself as having always been an ardent admirer of Art and Beauty, and more particularly of the dramatic muse; said that he had heard that Roderich, notwithstanding his remarkable genius, had, till the present moment, vainly hoped for recognition; spoke of the promising work which was now near completion. He, Anastasius von Sunthelm, was directly connected with the first theatres of the capital and would guarantee that the poet's work if it was at all worthy of the reports he had heard of it, should be brought out, this very season, in one of the first-class houses. Herr Lund would do him a favor by calling on him, the baron, at his earliest convenience — Heiligenthurmstrasse, number

eighty — and by bringing the tragedy, finished or unfinished.

A few phrases which followed seemed to Otto's more impartial judgment to proceed from the same pen that had composed the pæan in honor of the baron's benevolent wife; but Roderich, blinded by the dazzling prospect of the path now opened to him, after so many years of waiting, took them quite as a matter of course. When Otto had returned him the note he declaimed these passages aloud, rushing up and down like a possessed creature as he repeated certain expressions, and at length he threw his arms in a wild embrace round his fellow-lodger, who by degrees had caught a little infection from his companion's ecstatic satisfaction.

"You see," Roderich went on, "what a good thing it is for a man to go out a little now and then. I owe this good-fortune solely to my two visits to the Authors' club. People speak out there, discuss their sketches and plans, talk over men and things — and it all helps. Till this moment I always held your poetic rabble cheap, altogether superfluous; but I have changed my mind about that. By the side of the oak even the hazel-nut may find a place. I will become a member at once, if it is only to find out who has

spoken so well of me behind my back to Baron Anastasius Maecenas. Your Doctor Wolf I should not wonder — or Salomon! Yes, I believe it must have been Salomon! Gracchus, you see is a subject he would be likely to feel some respect for: it sounds advanced — has a whiff of 'tendency' about it. I must say I wonder greatly how the baron will carry through such a play. A fearful revolution on the stage, under the eyes of our idiotic gaping middle classes! — It would be a splendid sight in these degenerate times — divine — immortal!"

When the poet had calmed down a little they adjourned to their landlady's sitting-room. Here, as usual, the lamp threw a friendly circle of light, circumscribed by a gaily-painted shade, on the table by the sofa, and by the table sat Emma. Her skilful little hands, which, at the end of the day when her mother needed no further help in the house, made up garlands of flowers or painted ribbands, or such fragile finery in the corner room at the top of the lodging-house, were this evening stitching a pattern in silks into a piece of fine canvas. She raised her blushing face with a kindly greeting, and that smile which always gave Otto a sense of sunshine and May airs. She did not rise — they were by this time too intimate for

that, and in Frau Lersner's abode there was little ceremony — but her welcome was both polite and hearty. The two young men seated themselves with an absence of fuss that was surprising after the excitement of the last few minutes; but there was something in Emma Lersner that made all storm and turmoil seem out of place where she was.

In a minute or two they were joined by Frau Lersner; she had been paying a visit to a neighbor, and came in excusing herself for being late while she hastened to lay the table. It was soon done; the strictest frugality was always the rule at the family supper. Pröhle, who since Otto had joined them had been as punctual as the clock, was absent; he had given notice in the morning that he should be out, having some work to do after hours, and that he intended to be present at the great meeting at nine in the hall of Weidner's Brewery. Adele Jakoby, too, had not yet made her appearance.

When Frau Lersner, in speaking of Pröhle, mentioned the meeting, the poet gave it as his opinion that it would not be over before half-past ten; he, also, and — he hoped — Otto meant to look in, not necessarily to join in any demonstration, but chiefly to hear Leopold Meynert the dauntless orator, who was appearing in public for

the first time in the capital as "tribune" of the people.

Otto at once agreed that he would accompany Lund.— He longed to hear some one rage and scold; for, notwithstanding the transient pleasure he had felt in the change in Roderich's prospects, he still had a fractious craving to rebel against the "*status quo.*" It was heated feeling rather than a concurrence of clear notions that guided his actions. The mind, like the body, goes through that preliminary stage of intoxication in which we long to seize something and shake it, to pull up a post or lift a door off its hinges in a blind impulse of spiteful energy.

Shortly before nine Otto and Roderich set out; they walked fast, for a cold wetting fog hung in the streets and alleys. In spite of this, however, a densely-packed throng was swaying in front of Weidner's Brewery. They were crowding to the entrance, but they were not a noisy or riotous mob; their spirits seemed fettered by the anticipation of some impending events.

The audience, who had collected in the great hall on the first floor, consisted of very mixed and various elements. Working-men predominated; but there were numerous representatives of other classes: shopkeepers, men of science, artists, stu-

dents, journalists, and lawyers stood in large groups among the advocates of Social democracy. Otto and Roderich slowly pushed their way till they were close to the platform.

"'Morning, 'morning," they suddenly heard close behind them: Professor Salomon, who never said anything else, whatever time of the day it might be. "'Morning, Herr Lund! I am glad to see that your interest in the great questions of the day is growing, Herr Wellner. I really was afraid that the 'Glocke' had tolled the funeral knell of all your political energies. However — all honor to truth: 'The Bride of Catania' is here — the author I should say; only because he has some stirring popular scene in hand perhaps, and likes to work from the life . . . these gentlemen of the pen make a sort of literary extract of the whole world. Aye, aye, Herr Lund, you are one of the holy brotherhood, I know; well, I can only hope that you, at any rate, are in earnest in the cause of social development! Have you never heard Meynert before?"

"Never."

"Wonderfully clever! It is a pity — Liberalism could make good use of such men!"

"And tries to suppress them instead!" observed Roderich.

Salomon shrugged his shoulders. "That is a matter of taste," he said. "I respect every form of political conviction, even the most imbecile — I beg pardon, the word is not strictly parliamentary. But I consider it to be — logically incongruous, shall I say — to spring a mine under the house with a view to improving your domestic relations. You see, my respected friend, these socialists make a great point of the originality of their claims, and the brilliant radicalism of their revolutionary schemes. Good Heavens! Only let them read Plato's 'Republic,' or the Ecclesiazusae of Aristophanes — they will find all their modern sapiency there, chapter and verse. Plato never really wished to see such a Republic, you will say.— Granted, but what of that? The State, to Plato, was equivalent to our modern idea of the People, not to the preposterous excresence which we call the State . . . Besides, just consider the infinite dissimilarity in the conditions. Well, enough of that! This is hardly the place for giving an extempore lecture on such a vast subject. You shall hear what I have to say in the right place when the time comes. I am a declared friend of the people; but on that very account I distrust this mania, this conglomeration of inextricable brain-spinnings . . . ."

"You are quite at liberty to do so," replied Roderich coldly. "But you will perhaps allow . . ."

The President's bell, the signal for opening the meeting, interrupted his speech. The Editor of the 'Encyclopedia' nodded knowingly at the poet of the Gracchi, as much as to say: "Well, you will see" — then he withdrew a little way and was lost among a number of others.

On the order of the day Meynert's name was set down for an address on the comprehensive theme: "The State of the Future." After his speech there was to be a discussion and the "People's committee" had invited the oratorical talent of all parties alike to enter the lists and take part in the struggle.

Leopold Meynert, the locksmith of Oberhorchheim, mounted the platform. Otto was not a little astonished to see in the disaffected agitator — whom he had pictured to himself as clumsy and loutish, with a certain affectation of boorishness — a dapper personage, whose well-bred air would have done no discredit to any drawing-room. Meynert had an intelligent face with clean-cut features and an expression at times of genial frankness. The only doubtful detail was his deep-set eye which betrayed gross sensuality and a vein of ruthless and overbearing selfishness.

The Roman Emperor might have had such eyes, and such a look in them, as he sat fiddling while Rome was in flames. Otto Wellner was too far from the orator to read the secret that lurked behind those lashes; besides, he was too much excited to be a calm observer.

Meynert was received by his adherents with vociferous acclamations. The advocates of order were biding their time; only a few protested by whistling and hisses. The speaker then sketched in a few words the outlines of his subject and attacked it at once with much vigor.

The hearer who was prepared to grant the man's premises could not deny that his inferences were logical enough. He took those premises for granted as indisputable facts, ignoring that they needed proof; in this lay the principal craft of his rhetoric. He knew how to spin his yarn so deftly, and the thread gleamed with such splendor of color, that not merely his fellow-believers in social democracy, but even a considerable portion of the undecided and doubting party were ensnared and carried away by the charm of his illusory arguments. Otto particularly, to whom the subject was altogether new, whose knowledge of political economy was of the lowest average and who was far too much impressed by the

glamour of the artistic effect to be capable of testing the logic — Otto believed that this wily-tongued trickster spoke with the voice of a prophet calling to the people to awake from sleep, of a Moses exhorting the enslaved multitude to escape from the bondage of Pharaoh. Beguiled by this notion, it never occurred to him to remember that all the state of things which Meynert denounced as "intolerable" he had till this very hour submitted to as a matter of daily life. The State — so said Otto to himself — that merciless Belshazzar, must be made to do penance and strew its head with ashes; Leopold Meynert's hand had traced the flaming *Mene Tekel Upharsin* on the wall of its gorgeous palace!

When the speaker ceased there was a perfect thunder of applause; the revolutionary faction indulged in an orgy of shouts and *bravos*. Otto stood like one bewitched; a new world seemed opened out to him — a world in which he could work, fight, and win. He was completely befooled; his heart throbbed wildly, the blood mounted to the veins in his temples; he could not stay any longer in the hot, crowded hall. Heedless of the uncomplimentary remarks of the people he disturbed, he pushed his way through the closely-packed mob out into the air.

The impression made on him by Meynert's eloquence might perhaps have been qualified if he could have heard the remarks which Doctor Salomon now proceeded to fling at the meeting in his thundering bass-tones — with small effect, to be sure. Strong in his convictions, though not very rich in original ideas, the worthy man was a perfect treasury of everything that had ever been said or written to confute Utopian dreamers of political and social regeneration. He had beyond a doubt a certain gift of eloquence, more fitted, however, to work on the academic mind than on that of the masses. To-day he was quite in the vein: he pointed out the falsity of the foundations on which his adversary had built up his ideal structure — keenly, clearly, unbiassed by any tricks of fancy; he pulled Meynert's picture of society to pieces bit by bit, and ended with the effective appeal: "We are unprejudiced men, Liberals in the truest sense — and for that very reason we will resist the despotism of the masses. We insist on absolute freedom for all — and for that very reason we abjure social democracy."

In the opinion of every unprejudiced person — if in such matters any one is unprejudiced — Salomon had triumphed over his cleverer adversary. But the majority who, till now, had been

kept in order by the determination of the President and by Meynert's personal intervention, broke out like a tornado. They shouted, yelled and roared ; a few of the most furious became personally abusive. "Down with the idiot!" "He is paid by the rich snobs." "Knock him down, kick him out!" with other amenities of speech were howled and shrieked by the infuriated audience. The police cleared the hall.

"A pack of simpletons!" growled Salomon as he made his way with Wolf through the dimly-lighted streets. "But, as I always said, the mob can never see what's what. Without philosophy how can they be humanized!"

"And yet you want to place this unmannerly rabble at the helm!"

"Who says so?"

"Your party-programme."

"Pooh! That is the subjective construction you choose to put upon it! I want freedom — but a philosophical and cultured freedom! Well, enough of that! I am glad things have gone off as they have, the lubberly idiots! Good-night, my good friend."

He shook hands with Wolf and turned down a side street where he mounted the stone steps of

a tavern, for he had a strong academical-politico-philosophical thirst upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

OTTO WELLNER had got out into the street in an indescribable state of excitement. All the ideas and feelings that had been racking and tormenting him for the last few days, all his discontent and cravings seemed to have been reduced to a formula in Meynert's fanatical eloquence; and in the turmoil of his fermenting brain he held it for certain that this formula, once applied, would suffice to solve the hard problem known as the social question. His fancy wandered, with the facile creativeness of an artistic temperament, into rose-colored dreams, lending an aspect of probability to the orator's wildest theories down to their utmost details, and painting an El Dorado, of which the only fault was that it was based on the gaudy clouds of sunset in the infinite blue of the sky, instead of the solid earth and rocky platform from which real mountains tower.

Otto was roused from his dreams by hearing

his name spoken. Pröhle stood before him, evidently much agitated.

"A lucky chance!" said the type-founder, and his strong voice was husky and low. "I was going to look for you; I should have woke you if you had been in bed. You see, Herr Wellner, I can trust you — more than Roderich Lund, though he is one of our party. But I must tell you — hard as it is — or my heart will burst!"

Otto looked at him with astonishment. Some frightful excitement, partly pain and partly rage, twitched his lips under the thick moustache; his nostrils were distended and his eyes glared in the light of the gas-lamp like those of a panther. In spite of this half-frenzied expression there was something in the drooping attitude of his giant's frame that suggested a pathetic helplessness; the man looked broken and completely unhinged. Otto glanced round him; intoxicated, possessed, by his imaginings, he had walked on without thinking or caring whither. Now he wondered where he was; the spot where Pröhle had met him was recognizable by a handsome fountain on one side of the street — they were a long way from home, almost at the opposite suburb of the city and not more than a thousand paces perhaps from Doctor Lehrbach's residence.

"What brought you here?" asked Otto puzzled. "Were you not at the meeting at Weidner's Brewery?"

"I had something better — or worse — to attend to. Worse indeed — for I have behaved like an idiot. And yet — I had no choice; no, God knows I had no choice!"

There was an eating-house at the next corner. It was late, and in this part of the town there were few people in the streets; however, Otto judged it wiser to hear the confession or the secret Pröhle had to confide to him between four walls, for the type-founder had almost raved out the last words, clenching his fists, and was hardly able to contain himself from some more frantic demonstration.

So they went in. In the outer room a few youngsters — shop-men from the suburbs — were standing round a shabby billiard-table while a faded, coarsely-painted barmaid had posted herself behind a side table and was carrying on a confidential flirtation with one of the players.

The inner room was empty, and here Otto and Pröhle sat down. When the barmaid had brought them some far from sparkling beer and — finding that her vulgar fascinations were wasted — had retired again, Pröhle clutched Otto's arm and began:

"Have you noticed nothing, Herr Wellner? Nothing I mean between me and Fräulein Adele Jakoby?"

"Well," said Otto, "I have always thought you admired her."

"And so I do," said Pröhle warmly, "and I know, of course, that I have no turn for acting a part. When I feel anything it is written on my face at once and any child can read it. So it is hardly a confession when I tell you now. Yes, Herr Wellner, I love the girl — I love her more than anything else in the wide world and I can think of nothing else."

There was something very touching in the subdued tones of his great growling voice. All its roughness seemed to have been melted out of it as though nothing but the mere mention of that beloved name was enough to quell the sturdy nature of the man and to make him as gentle and docile as a child.

"Herr Wellner," he went on presently, and his hand trembled as he set down his half-emptied glass, "tell me — quite honestly, what is your opinion of Fräulein Jakoby?"

"In what way?" asked Wellner.

"Well, what I mean is — do you think I have

any prospects . . . ? Or is she too much above me — does she look higher?"

Otto shrugged his shoulders.

"I know her so little. From what I have seen I should say she likes you very well."

"Yes, yes; she is civil and kind; she puts up with me when I plague her with my odds and ends of chatter . . . But still, I feel . . ."

He broke off.

"Hang it all!" he exclaimed. "What is the use of beating about the bush. I made up my mind to tell you and I will, though every word may burn my soul like hell-fire.— You see, Herr Wellner, I am alone in the world. I have no relations — and no friends, for I am a dry sort of stick; I do not get on with every one and few take to me. But you now — I may tell you plainly — I liked you from the first. Your straightforward kind face, your eyes — I do not know what it is — but I feel sure, quite sure . . . In short you must let me tell you."

"Speak on."

"Well then, Fräulein Jakoby . . . Her aunt's room, I am afraid, is growing too small for her. She thinks too much of herself ever to become the wife of a plain workman — and a cub of a fellow into the bargain; she is so volatile, aye, and

pleasure-seeking. Do you remember — some time ago, the first evening you ever came to Frau Lersner's? Fräulein Adele went out directly after supper — to the shop, she said, but that was only an excuse."

"So I thought."

"Did you? Did you see through her so soon? And I — well I am a dolt! For months I had been feeling about in the dark till that cursed night — then I found her out.—It is dreadful, dreadful!"

"You take it too hard, my dear fellow. Here is a young lively creature, just seventeen. — Good heavens! Why she may have been to call on a respectable friend or perhaps to a concert — or, put it at the worst, to some dancing-room . . . ."

"Dancing! Alone! No! come now! That would be all very well for one of our folders or compositors, but not for Fräulein Adele. Just consider; the niece of such a very respectable woman, and a saleswoman to Toussaint and Gerold . . . ."

"Pooh, nonsense; is a compositor made of worse stuff than a shop-girl?"

"You are right enough," said Pröhle, "I did not mean that exactly . . . .You will pardon me — but a girl who is so remarkably pretty as Fräu-

lein Adele — there must be temptations — on all sides . . ." He hastily tossed off the last of his beer and then sat resting his head on his hand.

"To-night now," he began again in an altered voice, "do you know where she has been to-night? I have followed her like a dog — she left the shop as the clock struck seven. She had told them at home the same old story, that she would be kept there till ten or eleven. Well she comes out of the shop in her little fur-trimmed cape, as sweet as an angel — Lord! I could have run up to her then and there, and knelt on the ground before her, and begged her to forgive me for watching and spying — for, after all, what business or right is it of mine? She is free to do as she pleases. Well, I stood in the gateway close by. She turned off to the right, down the second turning and I after her, stooping a little with my hat over my face, and in a constant fright lest she should look round. Five or six streets further on, in a place where all the shops were shut, I saw a dark figure walking up and down, and before I knew where I was, she had taken the fellow's arm and they were at the next corner, by the Görlitz Square where the hackney-droskies stand — my heart beat so I thought it would burst; I could have shrieked out to her, but I

felt as if I was choking.—In they got, and the drosky set off across the square. I was in despair, but away I went after them, all down the Theresienstrasse and out towards the suburbs. The rascally driver went like the very devil, of course; as a rule you cannot get the wretched jades beyond a crawl, but now it seemed as if they had laid a wager to split my lungs. At last, in about five and twenty minutes, when I was on the point of dropping, they stopped at the door of the Northern Theatre. The performance had begun and the street was clear. Run as I would I was only just in time to see them disappear upstairs to the boxes. He was a middle-sized man, in a brown overcoat and pale yellow gloves. He had his back to me so I could not see whether he was young or old, but to judge from his walk he was none of the youngest. She of course took his arm, and no one could tell but what she was his wife, she was so natural and took it all so easily.— I, like a fool, was rushing up after them, but a man stood in my way and asked for my ticket.— That brought me to my senses. As usual I had no money about me, or at least not enough; and after all, I said to myself: What are you thinking of — what can you do? You cannot make a row in a public theatre; the

swindling rascal — d——n him! — who had got round her will only laugh in your face and call the police.— So I turned on my heel to think it over; on the wall by the door hung the play-bill; I stopped to look — 'over at nine.' Very good, said I, you wait.— It was of no use to go all the way home; so, half dizzy with running, I lounged about and counted the minutes; never in my life did an hour and a half seem so long. At last, just about nine, there was a stir inside the place. I watched the stairs like a lynx, and all the people who came down from the boxes. There were only a few — and Fräulein Jakoby and the man in the brown coat were not there! So they must have left before the play was over. But where had they gone? I can tell you I turned hot and cold, and for nothing at all I could have kicked one of the men who came pushing against me right down the steps."

"Well, but what next?" asked Wellner, much interested.

"What next? — What next is exactly what I want you to tell me. Shall I tell her out to her face all I know, and ask her, or get it out of her somehow, who the villain is — and then crack his skull for him? Or shall I tell her aunt to-morrow and take myself off afterwards — and the

sooner the better? Folly! — as if I could leave her even if I would. That is just the very devil of it! If you were to tell me this minute that she was — God knows what, that she had flung herself in the dirt for that miserable hound — badly as it would hurt me, I know I should love her still, just the same." And he thrust his fists into his eyes.

"And to know," he went on to himself, clenching his teeth, "that you must put up with it all simply because you are poor, because you have nothing to offer her, because you cannot give her a home where she can swagger round, or buy her lace shawls and gold bracelets! A woman's heart is always set on such miserable rubbish — for my part I should be content to live in a garret and wear my blouse Sundays and workdays if only I could see her dear little face and hear her voice. But Lord! a girl's heart is made of different stuff; it is like a butterfly that must flitter about in the sun.— Aye, the sun, there's the rub; gold, sacred gold — cursed filthy gold, is the only sun that shines and warms in this sordid, miserable world! . . .

"Give me your advice, Herr Wellner, and I will act upon it. Yes, I will do just as you bid me, even if you say: 'Take yourself off, Pröhle;

there is no hope for you here.' But say something, advise me somehow, or I shall go mad!"

"My dear fellow," said Otto much disturbed, "what advice can I give you? You can only try to find out how matters really stand. Under the circumstances — who can tell . . ."

"Yes, you are right," said Pröhle. "It does not do to go too fast. Perhaps — certainly as I think it over — she has no relatives here I know, and if Herr Toussaint — they do say. — But no, that will not hold water; a shop-girl arm in arm with the head of the house. Besides, it was not Toussaint; he is taller and younger — I tell you what, Herr Wellner, if I had that scoundrel here, guilty or not guilty — and he is guilty, for it is a rascally thing to get hold of a girl beneath him in rank and that he can only want to make a fool of — I tell you — do you see me smash this glass into a thousand atoms . . ."

Crazed with rage, he took up his glass and flung it on the floor with such violence that the fragments flew up and hit the ceiling.

"Don't be angry," he stammered, as Otto gazed at him in astonishment. "It was too many for me. I am too miserable — too miserable!"

The big man leaned bodily over the table, hiding his face on his arm, and the convulsive

jerking of his broad shoulders showed that he was sobbing noiselessly.

"Herr Pröhle," said Otto, waving away the barmaid who, hearing the smash, had come to the door, "Herr Pröhle, will you really act on the best advice that I can see my way to giving you?"

"Well?" said Pröhle, slowly raising his reddened face.

"Speak to Fräulein Adele herself, quite quietly and without the slightest trace of anger or jealousy. The girl seems to have no suspicions of your feeling towards her. Tell her your whole heart, explain your honest intentions, and ask her if you may have any hope. The prospect of marrying a good, faithful, honest man often has a wonderful effect on such butterflies, as you put it. Fräulein Adele is still so young, and to her the world is so fresh and bright that, in spite of all you have told me, I cannot imagine . . . In any case it will be the shortest way of learning the worst. If she refuses you — then of course you must leave — at once . . ."

"Leave!" interrupted the type-founder. "Very good. But first . . ."

And he raised his fist with a threatening glare.

"Control yourself!" said Otto. "Nothing is to be gained by force in such matters."

"I dare say," cried Pröhle, whose wrath had boiled up again; "that is what they always tell us when they promise us mountains of gold and end by giving us nothing! It is shameful, disgraceful, sickening! Do not misunderstand me, Herr Wellner, for God's sake; I have nothing to say against you. I only mean that everlasting cheating, lying, promising — and we, like idiots, believe and wait! This evening, for instance, Meynert, I make no doubt, crammed the poor souls with God knows what romantic palaver and smeared their silly mouths with milk and honey — and then the word is: 'Now for Legislation; give us a free ballot! Vote! Vote!' Pooh! I say to such silly chatter!— As if all that were even worth a trial! Let me have my way and you shall see! I would put an end to all the pother in no time; I would get a few thousand fellows together — fellows like myself — and then I would declare with a loud voice: 'You have had your turn and your time is out,' and I would make short work of any who objected!"

The trouble that had befallen him had driven him back into his Total-annihilation mood, and when he was under the influence of that particular

madness he would thunder out these monstrous views in a tone which, in spite of the childish simplicity of his logic, sounded like the growl of an approaching storm. He had indeed spoken so loud that the young party in the next room had overheard him, and two of them — one being a tall bony lad whom the barmaid addressed as Herr Arthur, known to us as Peltzer's neighbor at supper, at the "Golden Anchor" at Gernsheim — came to the door and looked in.

"I know that one," whispered Arthur, pointing out Otto.

"Do you? How and where?"

"I will tell you by and bye. Hold your tongue and listen. He seems to be in a pleasant temper!"

In point of fact the power of brute-force which inspired Pröhle's violent speech and was expressed in his tone and gestures, affected Otto much as Meynert's declamatory rhetoric had done an hour ago. The wild visions which had befooled his better sense during his lonely wandering through the streets were resuscitated in his deluded soul; a sort of pythonic enthusiasm came over him.

"My friend!" he exclaimed holding out his hand with dramatic emphasis, "the ideas you express with such crude originality, are perhaps the

whole secret of our century! Redemption will be worked out, to be sure, by other means than you imagine; but I — Otto Wellner — I tell you it must come, and it will come, or there is no God in Heaven. I, as I stand here, will be the first, in spite of every peril — nay, if necessary, by a deed of valor and violence and at the risk of my life — I will be the first, I say, to bear witness to the rights of the People! Now, come away!"

For a few minutes longer the couple sat dreaming; then they paid their reckoning and silently left the place.

"A pretty pair of hot-heads!" said one of the commercial gentlemen, as the door closed behind them. "Their speechifying has a strong smack of Meynert. I suppose they are specimens too of your vagabond orators who travel about at other folks' expense and stir up the working-men to be idle."

"I know that Wellner of old," cried Arthur. "A regular rowdy! At Gernsheim, one day, he was ready to fight every one at the dinner-table — and came very near doing it too."

"Wellner — Wellner?" said the former speaker. "I read pretty nearly everything that comes out about this Socialist craze, but I do not remember meeting with the name."

"But you are quite right," Arthur went on. "With his head in the air and his arm stretched out, bellowing and shouting, he looked for all the world like Meynert. I heard Meynert the other day, in Gernsheim — but I soon had had enough of it.— It is too idiotic! 'By a deed of valor and violence, and at the risk of my life . . .! Bear witness to the rights of the people . . .!' Freedom — Progress . . .! It is maddening to hear such mouthfuls of big words. Well, of course each one copies the rest."

"Much you know about it!" cried a fat fair girl, with hands as red as lobsters, "wait a bit and do not go too fast. For aught you know the man you are so hard upon may be the very one to start all Europe on the right road. Look on at the game a little longer or you may lose your stake — when all is said and done!"

Arthur handed his empty glass to the barmaid and chalked the point of his billiard-cue with an air which might convey: "I too — even I — though for the present I sell Dutch cheese and mal-odorous herrings in a side street, am one of the elect, destined to ride down the Louisenstrasse in a gilt coach, when once the apostles of freedom have got control over the capital which now is our tyrant and oppressor . . . Don't you

think so Elvira?" and he expressed this appeal to the sympathies of the faded Kellnerin, who at this moment set his glass, refilled, on the side table, by nipping her fat and painted cheek so that it looked like a sausage rolled in flour.

"There — have a drink first, my rosebud!" he said with a smile. "To the good time that's coming! Take my word for it, Elvira my dear, in the course of time changes will come — and then . . . ."

He sank his voice mysteriously. To the barmaid it had a sound as of a Sunday drunken row, as he added:

"Then — my master may cry for mercy!"

He grinned again and then, with a practised hand, sent the ivory balls rolling across the dingy billiard table.

CHAPTER XIII.

On the following day Otto left his office before six. The invitation to be present at the betrothal of Camilla von Düren to Erich von Tyllichau-Sassnitz fixed it at eight, but Otto was in a state of excitement like that of a young girl

going to her first ball; he had still a few purchases to make, and he was in the mood to take all these preparations very seriously; all the more so as he had to calculate his resources very closely: his modest salary was not due till the end of the month, and the gorgeous neck-tie, the fine shirt and well-fitting gloves which he had been obliged to buy before he could even call on Doctor Lehrbach had been costly acquisitions.

On quitting the office he made his way to the Louisenstrasse where the best shops are to be found, and at one of the most fashionable glovers he invested in two pairs of white glacé-kid gloves, bestowing them in the breast-pocket of his coat with as much care as a mother putting her child to bed. But then, as he went on through the busy street, the question forced itself upon him whether this passionate craving for a nearer acquaintance with the world of wealth and the luxury of the capital were not the symptom of a falling away from those principles which he had proclaimed, last evening, to be his most sacred convictions. His spirit was at war with itself and it was in vain that he tried to harmonize it; at length he pacified himself with the idea that he owed the possessors of all this splendor a deep grudge for their enjoyment and ease, thus raising

the envy, of which till now he had been conscious only as an instinct, to the rank of a political virtue. It must be confessed that the poison infused into his soul by the great social quack Meynert, had worked to admirable effect.

Five minutes later Otto entered the shop of Messrs. Toussaint and Gerold; as chance would have it, it was Adele Jakoby who came forward to serve him. She asked him what he needed with delightfully saucy deference and brought him out a quantity to choose from.

There was a lull for the moment in the press of business. Otto, remembering his stormy interview with the enamored type-founder, thought this an opportunity for a few leading hints and questions.

"You were at the play last night?" he said coolly.

The girl turned pale; it was too unexpected a thrust not to tell. She was a little shy of Otto, too; perhaps because she had noted how greatly he was attracted by Emma's refined homeliness. If Otto really knew — ! He would tell Emma, and if Emma were to know Adele would die of shame! For any one else she cared not a straw; even her aunt did not command her particular respect; but Emma! No, that she could not

bear! Emma must never know that her cousin had been seen in a box with Herr von Sunthelm, and had afterwards eaten oysters and drank champagne at the Hotel du Rhin. She was very innocent really, this little Adele. It had all happened — she did not know how or why — quite naturally; and nothing worse had come of it — absolutely nothing. — That Sunday, when the baron had given her sherry, it was quite a different matter; he had taken her hand.— But now, she had put an end to that at once! He had sat there like a lamb, like a school-boy at a sermon; he had only treated her — a truffled partridge after the oysters. . . .

All this flashed like lightning through her shrewd bright little brain.

"I?" she said stooping to open a gold-edged handkerchief box.

"Yes, you," said Otto. "Pröhle saw you."

"He must have made a mistake," she said recovering herself with a laugh. "Which will you have? This is the newest and most fashionable thing. Herr von Tyllichau — the bridegroom — bought a dozen and a half only yesterday." She held up a fine striped pocket-handkerchief such as was then the height of fashion.

"Really?" said Otto somewhat dashed by

Adele's cool denial. "And does Herr von Tyllichau do his own shopping?"

The girl's bright eyes twinkled with audacious mischief.

"That depends," she said with an air of reserve. "He comes in here now and then. Well, have you made up your mind? We are as busy to-day as a hive of bees," and she pointed to the doorway where a number of people were again crowding in.

"Very good," she said as Otto hastily put one aside, "I will wrap it in paper.— Scent it nicely and let just one corner of it peep out of your breast-pocket; then you will make no end of conquests. Pay there, please."

She scrawled a few lines on a bill and handed it to him; Otto went to the counting-desk — and ascertained beyond a doubt that Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz had a very expensive taste.

"It is shameful!" he muttered, as he went away. "All this contemptible deference for a handful of metal pieces."

Dwelling on the idea of this thraldom he went on his way through the swarms of people; then he remembered that Dr. Lehrbach had told him not long since that whist was a favorite game in the Von Dürens' house, and he tried to picture

to himself how he should feel if a trio of truculent officers tried to induce him to make a fourth. It would be a pleasant thing, by Heaven! to lose two or three hundred marks with a sweetly polite smile, and then be obliged to stammer out the awkward fact that "he had no money with him!" He could only hope that it was allowable to decline. — There was to be a ball after supper; a ball! For the first time in his life he imagined the charm of floating round over the polished floor of a brilliantly-lighted room to the sentimental strains of a waltz, with a living blossom in one's arms, a mysterious enchanting being, for whom the gleam of white shoulders, the flash of bright eyes and the sparkle of diamonds were the only fitting setting! But he knew that — of course — these joys were not for him. It would be his fate to play cards — he would have to stand confessed a working-man, a pauper. — In his fancy he saw the cards in hostile array — a foe coming down on his miserable purse, to threaten him, plunder him and force him to the humiliating acknowledgment: "I have nothing."

He reached home very much out of spirits. In the type-founder's room he heard the sighing of a concertina. If the instrument in any way interpreted the player's mood, the storm of yester-

day was over; there was no immediate prospect of Pröhle's provoking the cruel queen of his heart by a decisive question. "Ah! can it ever be, that I must part from thee"* — groaned the melancholy little machine — it might have been a country damsel sobbing for her faithless lover.

Otto felt for his match-box and lighted the lamp; as the gleam fell on the low small room it struck the young man's fancy that it was like a light in a prison-cell.

His eye was caught by the bed in the corner on which, carefully spread out, lay his black clothes, his clean and shining shirt — collar, cuffs, gibus hat — and a white tie wrapped in pink tissue paper.

The sight of these things moved Otto to a frame of mind which to the Baron von Tyllichau-Sassnitz would have seemed equally incomprehensible and ridiculous. There was, to be sure, something grotesquely melodramatic in the situation. Otto Wellner, who only yesterday had weighed the future of Society in the balance of his wrath and found it wanting — was standing here, gazing with real emotion at an array of ordinary evening dress! Any one looking below the sur-

* "Ach wie ist's möglich dann, dass ich dich lassen kann,"— A well-known popular German air.

face might, however, have detected the source of this singular mood. In the first place dead memories rose before the young man's mind: the image of his early home — a simple and humble home, sweetened by an atmosphere of loving care: the joys of his childhood, modest and unworldly, but beyond words — the kind eyes of his long-lost mother, who had so often in her day lent a grace to such prosaic objects as these — prosaic to thoughtless souls, but full of poetry and pathos to the initiated: his father's face, too — a grave, thoughtful man — that honored father whose mysterious will, treasured as a sacred relic, lay there in a drawer of the old wardrobe. And with these memories came another feeling: the comfortable sense of not being absolutely lonely in the chaotic turmoil of the great city, of having some one near him who took an interest in his hopes and pleasures — for this little care in putting out his things plainly revealed such kindness.

Presently Frau Lersner knocked at the door to ask whether he needed anything more. Otto pointing to the bed, said no — that she was a model landlady. Then she laughed and said he was thanking the wrong person — it was Emma who had thought that such a learned man would want some one to look after him a little.

Otto dressed quickly and by half-past seven went into the sitting-room with his overcoat on his arm. The worthy mother twitched and patted his collar, and helped him into his paletot; then, bidding her good-night, he went his way on foot.

In the Von Dürens' ante-room he met Doctor Lehrbach. The lawyer scanned him from head to foot with the air of a connoisseur and nodded approval: "Good!" he said, "very good. You are quite capable of running a tilt with our golden youth and holding your own, too. I mean as regards externals. So far as your talents are concerned — *cela va sans dire.* — Nay, you need not blush as if I had paid you an empty compliment. Do you know what is your greatest defect? You are too modest. Any one who wants to get to the front must do all he can to make the best of himself. Stand forth and assert yourself as a young god, and the world will fall at your feet. However, I like you better with your maiden shyness than all the patrician youth with their immaculate clothes and their empty skulls. Stop— wait a minute: your tie is not quite correct — in a work of art every line has its value." He put up his fat little hands, in their unwrinkled kid gloves, and gave a knowing twitch to the ends of

Otto's tie; then he tucked his crush hat under one arm and drew Otto's hand through the other, much as a country father might lead his bashful son to go courting a neighbor's daughter.

"Come with me," he said. "I must go across to the ladies' room to wait for my wife."

They went along the corridor which was already full of guests. Young women and girls in elegant full-dress came trooping out through the curtained doorway of the room where they had left their cloaks and hoods, and were met by husbands, fathers, and brothers, with that air of grave expectancy which is commonly assumed before entering a room full of company. They waited quite five minutes before Lucinda appeared; Otto bowed low to cover the agitation which he could never help feeling at the sight of this beautiful young creature. Lucinda this evening — as the first time he had seen her under the beeches at Oberhorchheim — was in white, only not in a simple morning gown, but in a splendid and costly dress. Her rounded shoulders and arms showed against the creamy silk like faintly-tinted flowers in an alabaster vase; there was something statuesque and classic in her aspect and yet she was a living, enchanting reality. In her hair she had a chaplet of diamonds, so ar-

ranged as to hide the fastening; it looked as though large glistening flakes had fallen on the head of this radiant snow-queen and had crystallized in obedience to her will, to crown her with light. Round her throat she wore a necklace to match.

This meeting at the door of the dressing-room sealed Otto's fate. The beatific admiration that flooded his being left him no doubt that he had lost his soul and senses to Lucinda — that he loved her with passionate devotion — that he had loved her from the instant when he first saw her divine loveliness in the noontide stillness of the wood. And inseparably from this he felt his heart gripped by acute suffering — the prescience of a terrible inward and outward struggle — a perfect hatred of himself. He started violently when Doctor Lehrbach said in his friendly simplicity:

"Well, what do you think of that gown *à la Minerve?* Simple and becoming? It was my own idea and met with my lady's approbation at once. I like to see a young woman dressed with some sort of respect for the dictates of Art."

Lucinda had greeted the young man with her usual reserve; a faint curl of displeasure passed over her lips at her husband's speech, and then she resumed her ordinary expression of lofty in-

difference. Dr. Lehrbach offered her his arm and they went along the gallery to the tall doorway, with a frieze above it, that led into the drawing-rooms.

Otto followed them, stunned by the storm of his own feelings. He made his bow to the mistress of the house like a man in a dream; but Frau von Düren, who was standing by the door surrounded by a group of laughing and eager guests, was far too much occupied to give more than a polite nod to the sub-editor of the "Glocke." He was received no less coolly by her husband; but Camilla, whom he had not seen since he left Oberhorchheim, held out her hand, so that Baron von Tyllichau-Sassnitz, who was standing by her side, could not avoid affecting some degree of cordiality. Otto offered his congratulations — doing his utmost to prevent the hero's suspecting the faintest trace of irony in his tone. To Camilla herself Herr von Tyllichau was the beau ideal of attentive courtesy, and Otto began to wonder whether he had not been unjust in his estimate of the young prodigal.

The great drawing-room, and two rooms adjoining, grew, by degrees, fuller and fuller of long rustling trains, white ties, and gaudy uniforms. Tea was handed round. Otto exchanged a few

civil words with Doctor Wolf, who was soon surrounded by half-a-dozen ladies past the bloom of youth who besieged him with a storm of flattery which he good-humoredly parried. Further in the background Salomon's voice was audible as he stood with his arms folded, talking politics with dramatic vehemence to a court official. His victim at last turned on his heel with a sardonic smile, and then the professor attacked Otto, shaking hands with him and gently drawing him aside.

"Well," he said, "and how do you like yourself here? Patrician wealth, lordly opulence! And then the proud consciousness that you have earned it all yourself — that it is all the fruit of your own personal-political economy — which is accurately true in Von Düren's case.— What do you say to that — heh?"

"I say," replied Otto, "that the crop is enormous, preposterous! How many thousands of men, no less clever and hardworking have nevertheless . . ."

"Right — you are quite right! Such success as Herr von Düren's must always remain a matter of luck. And I must admit that the scale of hospitality here does not answer to the ideal laid down by the Philosopher. At the same time — I may own to a sort of æsthetic satisfaction when

I see a highly-organized undertaking prosper, and industry and prudence propagating good. Take my word for it, young man, the path to great results is not so thornless as perhaps you fancy. I can tell you . . ." and his voice sank to a whisper — "even the firm of A. H. Düren has had some awkward passages. It is no secret — six or eight years ago a disaster occurred which was within an ace of ruining the whole concern. The sparrows on the housetops chirped it to one another that at the Easter sales, the firm of Düren had failed to pay 150,000 thalers that they owed to two paper manufacturers. In the publishing world it was thought to be all up with them; they were allowed three months to complete their ruin — but they weathered the crisis. If the smash had come our friend here would have lost not only the fruits of twenty years of labor but the fortune he inherited as well, which, before he grew ambitious, amply satisfied his moderate views. A doubtful prize, after twenty years of toil, do not you think? The man was not a capitalist you must understand in the socialist sense, not a *bourgeois*, a money-grubber, battening on the sweat of working-men, but a working-man himself, ready and willing to earn the position he had set his heart on. Well, enough of that!"

He moved away with much dignity. Otto took his stand on the marble hearth-flag and reviewed the company. A few young ladies in bewitching ball-dresses attracted his interest — the graceful trickery of their glittering fans, the gentle movements of their flower-decked heads charmed his fancy. He saw one of them turn to look after Salomon; she laughed — her teeth were like ivory — there were two delicious little dimples in her cheeks — and yet, Otto thought, there was no one — literally not one to compare with Lucinda. His eye sought her; there, far away, in the remotest corner, she leaned at her ease in a handsomely-carved arm-chair. A dozen men, old and young, were fluttering round her, eager to win a smile, a glance, or only a word of recognition. Still, there she sat, supreme and unapproachable in her serene, marble beauty; nay, as she raised her fan to her face, Otto felt certain it was to hide a yawn. This conviction filled him with delight; he could not have borne that his Lady in white should show even a gleam of favor to any one of her circle of adorers.

As he stood there, letting his thoughts drift as they might, Doctor Lehrbach suddenly clapped him on the shoulder.

"Listen to me," he said in a low voice. "I

have been thinking . . . you must get at the heart and marrow of this performance. You must contrive at supper to sit near some important person — Von Sunthelm let us say. I, for one, do not rave about the baron; he is nothing but an old dandy, and you could not find his heart if you tried; but that is not to the point at present. He is rich, of an old family, and very good company: that is quite enough for the part he is called to play. It can do a young fellow who wants to rise no harm to make acquaintance, at any rate, with a man of good position.— It is the same with a number of others — in short, I told my wife you should take her in to supper. She has the immense advantage, so far as you are concerned — quite apart from her personal and social merits — of being at home here and of having one of the best places. Make no difficulties, my dear fellow! Never mind if people think it a piece of impudence . . ."

"You are too kind . . ." stammered Otto; but his friend gave him no time to argue.

"Now first of all," he said taking Wellner's arm, "come with me and inspect the *vieille garde*, the old-established friends of the family. I must introduce you to them, you will soon make acquaintance with youngsters after supper. Stop—

let me give you a little information. Look there — that lady, well past fifty, with bobbing curls and a yellow face — that is the Baroness Eleonora von Sunthelm, Baron Anastasius' wife. What, you know her? By sight? Good. The man to whom she is speaking — not the young one with his hair cut in a fringe, you saw him before at Oberhorchheim: Kurt Ewald, a poet by trade, but by the grace of God the son of a millionaire; — no, the other one, with a huge bald head — is one of our most popular novelists, Doctor Keyser, the president of the Authors' club. You may live to shake hands with him yet. To his right, that little clean-shaved man is Löbbing, the famous national-liberal member, a mighty speaker and a first-rate whist player. He is unlucky in love, for his wife, they say, henpecks the valiant defender of the people most unmercifully, but he is proportionally lucky in play, and especially at a rubber.— A military-looking man with a pleasant, shrewd face is his excellency General Clairvaux. There, — there comes the Baron, Anastasius the magnificent — there; do you see? Not a tall man, but conspicuous for the dazzling perfection of his shirt-front — speaking now to Doctor Keyser. — A gracious being, heh? Quite the Maecaenas?"

It was with a strange mixture of feelings that Otto recognized, in the Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe, the mysterious stranger who, on that Sunday afternoon, had pursued him home to the Sandgasse. That incident had made no very lasting impression on him; but now, and in connection with the note to Roderich Lund, a light was thrown upon it which gave it prominence in his mind. Whatever its import might be Otto decided that he, at any rate, must give no outward sign: he said nothing to Lehrbach of his adventure and prepared to be perfectly unconscious of it with the baron; — besides, their meeting had been so brief and so purely accidental!

They made their way across the room and in a few minutes Otto found himself within the charmed circle of the elect. Doctor Lehrbach introduced him with the emphasis of personal friendship, and a man thus recommended by Doctor Lehrbach was certain of a polite reception. The parchment-colored countenance of the baroness, particularly, beamed affably on the young man; her keen grey eye had at once recognized the sub-editor in the office of the "Glocke." Perhaps she hoped to find in the lawyer's protégé one of those "promising talents" whom she so urgently needed in the interest of public welfare.

While she only gave Wellner time to make his bow to Herr Löbbing, to General Clairvaux, and to the laurelled president of the Authors' club, before she seized upon him with eager volubility, her husband stood a few paces behind her, nervously stroking his dyed beard, wriggling and shrugging his shoulders till his shining shirt-front creaked and crackled. The idea that had struck him so forcibly on that Sunday, was being confirmed to a certainty. His lips quivered, and twice or thrice the tip of his tongue showed between his teeth.

"Control yourself, man!" he was saying to himself. "It is preposterous that you should be so staggered at meeting the man whom you saw in Lehrbach's carriage, in his father-in-law's house. Nothing can be more natural. Why this ridiculous heart-beating, this secret shudder, this unpleasant sensation down your spine? The thing is not proved to a certainty even now — and if it were, forewarned is forearmed."

So Baron Anastasius controlled his sinister suspicions with the grace of a practised dissimulator; he bowed coolly, politely, and with a grand air to the young man whom Lehrbach introduced as his friend—but there was a glitter in his eyes, a dull fire beneath his drooping eyelids, like the

glare of a fox when he hears the hounds on his track.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUPPER was now announced and in the various groups there was a stir and bustle like that of an ant-heap. Herr von Düren, as silent and grave as ever, led away the Baroness Eleonora, General Clairvaux took the mistress of the house. And so, two and two, the company defiled through the inner drawing-room to the dining-room.

The touch of Lucinda's hand on his arm transported Otto into a realm of dreams; he dared not look up — hardly dared breathe. He had the key now to the feeling that had thrilled him when that same hand had laid the wet handkerchief on his forehead. Amid the chaos of noises on every side he heard nothing but the rustle of her silk dress; he saw her — though his eyes were fixed on the carpet — saw every line of her graceful figure and lovely face.

She walked on, with her head a little on one side, and an indifferent gaze from under her long lashes. She saw her sister Camilla looking at Eric with a rapturous smile and a bright color

in her cheeks. Lucinda had no particular liking for Eric von Tyllichau; she saw through his unsteady and untrustworthy nature with the intuition of a superior woman. But now, when her own and her mother's opposition had been overruled by her father's persistency and Camilla's urgent entreaties, she felt it only right to keep her opinions to herself and sympathize as far as possible with her sister's dreams of happiness. The gladness that beamed so unmistakably in Camilla's eyes was really enough to disarm sceptical anxiety. But this evening Lucinda herself was, for the first time in her life, under the influence of a wonderful excitement; she felt just as though the curtain had been lifted from before the shrine which she had till now supposed to be vacant, and had revealed the Divine Image, radiant and glorious in the sun-light. Her breath came faster; a faint sigh fluttered through her parted lips; then, with hasty decision, she looked away.

She smiled with bitter satisfaction at seeing Anna Föhrenstedt, the fashionable physician's wife, sitting quite near her. Lucinda, of course, knew all that town-gossip had to say about this couple; she knew that the popular adviser, who never left a lady in the lurch when she wished to spend the winter at Mentone or a summer at

Scheveningen, was indifference itself to his wife, treating her with the impudent contempt which makes a man think himself justified in tossing away, like a neglected toy, the heart that has been given into his keeping. Lucinda knew how keenly Frau Föhrenstedt suffered under this treatment; but whereas she had hitherto felt only womanly compassion for the hapless soul, she was now conscious of a certain infusion of complacency in comparing the enviable lot she herself had drawn with that of the poor victim.

Three long rooms, separated only by curtained doorways, were thrown open, and one long table ran from end to end. The glitter of silver plate and of cut glass, the lavish abundance of flowers, ferns, and innumerable wax-lights, gave promise of a magnificent banquet. The rooms themselves, with their cornices of polished *verd-antique*, their handsome hangings, and elegantly-painted ceilings, had an intoxicating effect on Otto — and in the midst of all these glories, she, the most glorious of all, the Lady in white, the star-crowned radiant woman . . . . !

Otto felt that he must collect himself; to give himself courage he drank off a glass of the strong Greek wine which was now sent round; he was secretly grateful to Baron Anastasius, who sat on

Lucinda's right hand, for dividing his chivalrous attentions between his own lady and Otto Wellner's, and addressing a few words to the lawyer's wife which relieved the young man of the duty of plunging at once into conversation.

He took advantage of the reprieve to make a survey of his opposite neighbors between the silver vases and the jars of flowers. His *vis-à-vis* was General Clairvaux with Frau von Düren; next to her, smiling and cavalier as usual, sat the happy lover and next to him again his Camilla. Then came some official personage, Von Tyllichau's uncle on the mother's side. Close to this gentleman's shoulder bobbed the ringlets of the Baroness von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe — then came her partner, the master of the house. In short Otto, the unknown and youthful sub-editor, found himself among the cream of the company; and if he rightly interpreted Herr von Düren's look of speechless enquiry, that gentleman regarded this singular arrangement as startling to say the least, if not actually unbecoming. An uncomfortable sense of being in a false position was rapidly developing in Otto's mind when he caught sight of Lehrbach's rubicund and radiant countenance, nodding to him from a seat a little way down on the same side of the table. "Go on and pros-

per," that nod seemed to say. "Do not be scared by your neighbors. I—your friend and supporter, have settled it all—and I have a right to decide."

Before long Otto found himself talking with some freedom to the good man's handsome wife. Lucinda said little, but she understood the art of listening in such a way as to inspire her companion to eloquence. He soon lost his awkwardness; even the discovery that the baron was listening with both his ears did not trouble him. Weighed against the unutterable charm which held him bound, every other consideration was worthless—a mere dead letter. He did not even heed the softened strains of music which accompanied the talk and clatter. It was not till the tempered sound suddenly ceased that he became conscious of it.

Herr von Düren rang on his glass. In a brief speech he welcomed his guests, and then officially announced the open secret of the occasion of this festive meeting: The betrothal of his daughter, Maria Eleonora Camilla, to Baron Albert-Eric von Tyllichau-Sassnitz.

When he ceased Doctor Lehrbach raised his glass to lead the cheers for the affianced pair. He acquitted himself of the duty with admirable grace; his little introductory speech was so full

of hearty feeling that its effect was far greater than that of any ordinary toast. Frau von Düren put her handkerchief to her eyes; Camilla's father sat staring fixedly before him; Camilla herself was radiant, and the bridegroom seemed deeply touched. Lehrbach painted the joys of married life in glowing colors as the only form of happiness which could wholly and truly satisfy the heart; he dwelt on the solemnity of the occasion, expressed the hopes of the parents and the good wishes of their friends.

Even those who knew nothing of the speaker's private life could not fail to feel that his was a thoroughly harmonious nature — that he was a man to whom the peaceful joys which he extolled were a matter of experience. He ended with such fervent spirit that the cheers, which thundered through the rooms with a loud burst of music, had all the effect of genuine and spontaneous enthusiasm.

When the storm had died away the betrothed couple rose and went round to thank some of the elder members of the company for their presence and congratulations. The younger people had left their seats during the cheering, and had offered their good wishes to the young pair. Otto wondered whether he ought not to give his arm

to his lady and lead her round, but he dared not. So he sat in uncomfortable doubt till Tyllichau and Camilla came up to them. He and the baron clinked glasses — Otto with a touch of sentiment in his politeness which evidently much pleased the hero of the moment. The two sisters embraced each other with tender affection, and as Lucinda sat down again Otto thought he detected a sparkling moisture in her eye — which did not resolve itself into a tear. But her face and manner were unusually bright; and when Baron Anastasius asked her some question, there was a gracious mirthfulness in her reply, a subtle, gay audacity . . .

When Camilla and Tyllichau had returned to their seats the fun grew faster and the temper of the company more festal. His excellency General Clairvaux proposed the health of the parents of the bride-elect; Herr Löbbing proposed that of Tyllichau's uncle; the editor of the "Glocke" recited a graceful "impromptu" in honor of the ladies; Professor Salomon, in his thundering bass, invited them to drink to the continued prosperity of the grand enterprise which had been created by the head of the famous Firm, and invoked a blessing on the progress and development of society and citizenship.

All these toasts aroused no response in Otto's mind. In spite of the choice old Burgundy which he had tasted freely enough, in spite of the finest Rhine wines which had followed, and in spite of every effort of will, he was in a strange frame of mind — absolutely indifferent to everything that had no direct bearing on Lucinda. He passed the most tempting dishes though he had not eaten a morsel since his breakfast. He replied at random to the timid remarks of Frau Föhrenstedt, who sat on his left — so much beside the mark, in fact, that the poor woman colored more than once, leaving it doubtful whether she regarded his absence of mind as an incivility or as rather flattering. Doctor Lehrbach, who was the only person to observe her blushes and who did not know what the young man might have said to occasion them, threatened Otto once or twice with his fat forefinger, as much as to say: "Fie — you must not play any naughty tricks here!" — he had little notion of what Otto's real feelings were.

They rose from the supper-table at about eleven and the company paired off again to return to the drawing-rooms. The largest was cleared for dancing; divided from this by an ante-room were the smoking and card-rooms.

When the dancing began the gentlemen were

released from their duteous attendance on the ladies they had taken in to supper. New partnerships were formed, even for the opening polonaise. When Otto had made his bow to Lucinda he joined Doctor Salomon, who happened to be passing, in a promenade through the corridor which was decorated with flowers, and finally, in tow of the worthy professor, found himself in the famous conservatory of Von Düren's house. Some time since Salomon had enlarged on the therapeutical importance of this wonderful winter garden; he had pointed out that Herr von Düren, by transferring the Italian atmosphere and Italian plant-life hither, under the foggy shroud of the north, had increased the elasticity of his body and mind, and consequently prolonged his powers of work.

Irrespective of such considerations this conservatory was a master achievement of modern iron-work and remarkable for magnificent specimens of every class of vegetation.

The rest of the company seemed to find more attraction in the sound of dance music, just beginning, in the fragrance of tobacco, or at the well-lighted card-tables, than in the Agaves and Orchids which they had often seen before; indeed, Doctor Salomon would probably have allowed

himself the peaceful enjoyment of a cigar on the leather covered cushions of the divan in the smoking-room, if the cooler atmosphere of the passage had not tempted him out, and the pleasure of explaining, showing, and descanting had not detained him in the conservatory.

The two men soon found themselves alone. The winter garden was indeed a delightful place, a scene of enchantment. It was dimly lighted and the soft twilight among the fan-palms, the orange-trees and oleanders had a mysterious moonlight effect. Otto could have abandoned himself to rapturous dreaming, but that his companion's incessant flow of words scared away the elfin visions, born of tepid airs and perfume.

At the end of a quarter of an hour Salomon, who even here, could not seal the fount of his learning, was for going back to the drawing-room; but Otto longed to enjoy the intoxicating influences of this tropical night, for a few minutes at least, without the prosaic comments of his philosophical friend; so he said: "If you will go I will follow you in five minutes," — and when Salomon had left him, not without hesitation, he made his way into the outer portion of the hothouse. There he seated himself on a bench not far from the door, and breathing the heavy scent

of magnolias and pomegranates he closed his eyes and gave himself up to a half-waking dream.

How long it had lasted he did not know, for his brain was too busy to estimate time, when behind him, and beyond a screen of shrubs, he heard low voices — two, a man's and a woman's.

That of the man, though cautiously sunk almost to a whisper, struck him at once as familiar; but it was in vain that he hastily thought over the list of his acquaintance who were likely to be in this place. He could identify no one as the owner of the voice. The girl's voice was quite commonplace. Nothing could be further from Otto's nature than prying curiosity; surprise, however, and his strangely unsettled mood kept him from moving; he was in a half comatose state which weighed on his volition; and by the time he had mastered the situation and saw that the part of an involuntary listener, under the present circumstances, was obviously less defensible than it had been in the wood, when the two ladies had come within earshot — it was too late. He decided that it would be better to let the couple return by the same way as they had come; there was evidently another alley behind the clump of shrubs — they had not come in from the corridor or Otto could not have failed to see them.

"And you will really come with me?" said the man in a tone of impassioned tenderness. "You are not afraid of the long voyage and a foreign home?"

"Not a bit," replied the girl's voice. "You can do what you like with me, and you know it — I am ready to go with you among the Indians and Cannibals. All I ask is that you will make short work of it."

"As short as possible; am not I dying of impatience just as much as you? And I will make it up to you, Fanny—you shall live like a princess! Do you hear, my pretty pet?"

This sort of thing went on for some little time, interrupted by tender sighs and energetic kissing. At last the girl said:

"Now, I must be going. The dancing has begun and I am sure to be wanted in the anteroom. Good-bye, my dear—you may go quite safely up the middle stairs; you will not meet a soul there now, and you know how to get round the porter!"

Otto heard the pair kiss once more with impassioned fervor, and then the man's steps went off into the distance. The love-sick Fanny waited till the sound had died away; then she went along the alley behind the shrubs towards the

glass door leading into the inner division of the conservatory. The paths wound in and out, and before she had gone far she stood still, for two men were talking in the other half. They came on, straight through the open door; Anastasius von Sunthelm and Eric von Tyllichau. Otto, by leaning forward a little, could plainly see their faces, flushed and beaming from a good meal and quite enough wine.

"It is a most interesting affair, my dear Tyllichau," said Von Sunthelm, "and really there is something quite romantic about the little adventure. To be wounded in the service of protecting two ladies — what more distinguished or exciting stroke of fortune can a young man hope for? I may say that I have taken a particular fancy to this Otto Wellner. Do you know anything of his antecedents?" Tyllichau answered absently; his quick eye had caught sight of pretty Fanny behind a palm-tree. He turned on his heel, thus compelling his companion to do the same and the elder man repeated his question: but Otto could not overhear the answer which was given in a low tone. The two gentlemen thus made their way back to the open door; their slow steps crunching the gravel.

Fanny did not stir; she was waiting till the

coast was clear, for the way by which her mysterious lover had gone would have taken her to another part of the house. She listened, all was still; she was on the point of making a rapid rush for the corridor when another comer interfered — Herr von Tyllichau appeared at the door, alone; and he came straight towards her.

"So I have caught you at last, you little imp of mischief!" he whispered taking the girl's head between his hands. "And what is the meaning of this? There was a time when you could not see enough of me, but you are quite changed within the last few weeks. You will crave for pardon, you silly little rogue, and do penance as you deserve."

"Herr Baron, consider, think," stammered Fanny. "If my young lady were to find out . . ."

"That is my affair. One kiss — in all honor."

"Oh! I am in such a fright! Let me go, Herr Baron, you must not, it will never do . . ."

"But here is proof to the contrary," said the baron.

And again Otto had the doubtful pleasure of hearing the smack of an emphatic kiss; a second and a third bore evidence that Fanny's resistance had been feeble.

"Why, child," said the profligate lover,

"what are your lips so like cherries for, if it is to be a crime to touch them? Listen now — how would it be if you were to arrange so as to have a little errand to do in Prinzessinnenstrasse to-morrow evening, about seven? Heh?"

"Impossible; I shall be busy to-morrow from morning till night — and the next day, too. And besides, as I say, if my young lady should come to know . . ."

"But she will not. However, just as you choose — I am a good-natured fellow and can pay for my amusements.— Now, why are you in such a devil of a hurry?"

"I must go — no, no, not another second.— Oh! you are breaking my fingers, you are very rude and disagreeable, Herr Baron! Merciful Heaven, what a world we live in!"

And she fled like a gazelle. Tyllichau looked after her.

"A fascinating little hussy!" he said to himself as he smoothed his moustache. "If the fair Camilla had half as much blood in her veins . . . . 'Pon my soul! to-day of all days — it is rather too strong perhaps. Well, she knows nothing about it, and after all . . ." And he went back into the house humming a gay air from one of Suppé's operas.

Otto rose; he was excited and indignant beyond measure. He longed to rush after the young baron, to fling some vehement utterance of contempt in his face — or else, heedless of the scandal it would create, to go to the bride's parents and proclaim: "You are selling your daughter's happiness to a miserable ruffian!"

Then, suddenly, a scorching shame filled his soul. The rapturous romance which Lucinda had raised in his brain he saw suddenly in the light of a base piece of treachery. He had given himself up to its enchantment with the simplicity of a child; now, the sight of another man's disloyalty roused his conscience. A grave face rose before him — the face of the friend who, out of the depths of a guileless heart, had admitted him to such unsuspecting intimacy and shown him such generous liberality; the kind, frank features wore a look of pained reproach. Had he not sinned against him already? Already laid hands on his benefactor's happiness? For Lehrbach was his benefactor, even though he had made no great sacrifices for his protégé, though he had done nothing of a kind to entitle him in ordinary parlance to life-long gratitude.

Otto returned to the ball-room deeply agitated. In the turmoil of his feelings he had

totally forgotten what, under other circumstances, would have given him matter for reflection: the words of Baron von Sunthelm. The immediate impression had been startling. Baron Anastasius had a fancy for him! — a broader lie, he felt, was never uttered — or his fancy was expressed in lowering looks, a scowling brow, a nervous twitching of the lips. — However, as Otto entered the room where the couples were swaying and spinning to the rhythm of a languishing waltz-tune, he had ceased to think of the mystery of this enigmatical man. His own guilt weighed, almost tangibly as it seemed, on his burning brow.

He saw Lucinda floating past, in the arms of a splendid young officer.

"Lieutenant Clairvaux — son of his excellency the general . . ." Doctor Wolf explained.

Wellner could not take his eyes off the pair. The tall, manly figure, the bright glad-looking face, at once massive and refined, roused his fiercest jealousy. Virtue, prudence, all that his bitter remorse had whispered to him were swept away by the storm. His passion surged up, more irresistible than ever, and with it a sinister presentiment of threatening evil.

CHAPTER XV.

It was a morning in the beginning of November. Ever since the night of the betrothal Otto Wellner had lived almost a hermit's life, going neither to the Von Dürens' nor to see his paternal protector Herr Lehrbach, and paying no visits even to the family of his worthy landlady. Under pretext of press of work he had retired every evening after tea to his own room, and there brooded over his melancholy thoughts or made vain attempts to pursue his literary studies. But he could do nothing; he found it impossible to give his attention to a single page, and could only get through the absolutely necessary work of his office, which had now become to a great extent mechanical.

On the morning in question, Otto was sitting as usual in the editor's office, finishing, with a sigh, a letter to the president of the "Authors' club," Herr Doctor Keyser. The contents of the letter were in themselves unpleasant, for it was to inform the popular writer that his last novel in four volumes, "Melting Outlines" was

not considered suitable to be reviewed at any length in the "Glocke." He heard the three familiar taps at the door, and Doctor Salomon's jolly round face shone in on Otto's moodiness, as the sun rises above a fog.

The man's unfailing and dignified geniality had for Otto an irresistible charm, and he listened with genuine pleasure to the professor's proposal that they should at once carry out their plan of visiting every department of the Firm's works. He felt as if the worthy political economist had held out a hope of release from the oppression of his general dissatisfaction. Doctor Wolf made no objection; the letter to Keyser was finished, and everything else could wait till the afternoon. The editor of the Encyclopedia of political economy made his way through the interminable passage which, turning off at the angle of the wing, led through the main buildings of the third quadrangle.

"We will go first through the type-foundry," said Salomon in the tone of a lecturer. "On logical grounds this seems to me to be beginning at the beginning. Come."

In the very first room of the foundry they came on the herculean Pröhle. He was brief, reserved, almost rude. When, in answer to Sal-

omon's enquiries, he explained that ever since the beginning of August he had been exclusively employed in casting the letter n, and worked every day for nine hours, Otto imagined that the type-founder, though not usually prone to jesting, was laughing at him. The enormous stores of this single letter, waiting only to be finished and sorted, convinced him, however, of his mistake.

From the type-foundry they passed into the shop for Zincography; then to that for wood-engraving and copper-plate, and from thence to the printing-rooms. The great rotating machines, working incessantly day and night; the incredible rapidity with which the blank sheets were printed and delivered; the accuracy of the hot-press rollers; the precision with which each workman did his part in feeding and regulating the ceaseless rise and fall of the cylinders, fly-wheels and machine-belts — all made a deep impression on Otto, and again the envious thought rose in his mind: "All this strenuous and incessant activity of so many hundred hands for the service and benefit of one man!"

After seeing the compositors and printers they went into a large room devoted to book-binding. Here the scene was repeated: The enormous

presses, each with a power of several ton-weight, the cutting-machines with their guillotine-like knives, and the endless piles of sheets, folded, stitched, or bound, combined to give an idea of colossal enterprise and labor.

In the last room sat a number of girls noiselessly occupied.

"These," said Salomon, "are the gilders. There, on the shelves to the right, wrapped in grey paper, you see a store of gold-leaf: there to the left are the types and, lower down, the tools for stamping; first you see — but you had better watch how it is done.—Would you allow me . . . ?" and he went up to one of the girls who was evidently a beginner, and had a very simple piece of work entrusted to her. She looked up.

"Martha!" Otto involuntarily exclaimed.

It was, in fact Martha, the fair-haired *Killnerin* from the Golden Anchor at Gernsheim; Martha, whom Otto had seen so recently riding in the carriage by the side of that Frau Tharow. She now had on a grey checked cotton gown, almost as plain as a nun's, and her features had the same look of silent sorrow as they had worn when Otto first saw her. Nay, it seemed as though some real grief had added itself to her habitual melancholy — a grief too deep for lamentations,

but that weighed all the more heavily on her soul. A faint blush of surprise tinged her face.

"Do you know that pretty, fair girl?" whispered Salomon.

"I beg your pardon," said Otto to Martha, "but your name rose to my lips — at Gernsheim — but you will hardly recollect . . ."

"Oh yes — I knew you again," replied Martha indifferently. "You came with the schoolmaster from Halldorf . . . ."

"With Herr Heinzius, quite true! — And it surprised me to come upon you here — when quite lately . . . ."

Martha bent over her work and made no reply.

"What I was about to ask," Salomon put in, "was whether you would kindly permit — Herr Otto Wellner is going over all the works — would kindly explain to him the process of gilding, for I, I confess, am perfectly ignorant of the art."

"Oh, never mind," said Otto smiling, for at the moment he was more interested in Martha than in her work. "I should not like to detain the young lady. We can just see — what is it you are at work on?"

He took up a finished book-cover. "Sophonisba," he read in smart gold letters. "A tragedy by Kurt Ewald."

"Kurt Ewald!" added Salomon, putting the cover close to his spectacles. "A very promising young man — well, he is past thirty, to be sure, — a member of our literary club — but you know him, I forgot. The only marvel to me is that he should have finished anything! One of our colleagues nicknamed him 'Ahasuerus,' because he dawdles on, year after year, over his unfinished work; like Penelope he undoes by night what he has done by day. Erasures, revisions, remodellings — these are the breath of his nostrils; the pity is that as a rule he cuts out what is good and leaves what is bad — or so Herr Keyser declares. A very moderate amount of talent — inspired by respect for his own genius! Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing rolled into one — the predestined Messiah of the German Drama! — And at the same time a peppery fellow, who takes nothing so much amiss as other people's success. In the club — by the way, you ought to come to us one evening. We have a meeting this evening, and as a member of the editor's staff you are due to put in an appearance."

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly! I myself am one of the upper ten of the office; but I think it encourages good feeling — *esprit de corps.* — And we are not all

mere novelists and rhymsters; you will find several serious writers—for instance Kuno, the geographer, from Zehl, and Willibald Kuhner, the lecturer on philosophy. The political press, again, is very adequately represented. Listen, I will make an arrangement with you on the spot. I will fetch you at half-past six; we will toddle off to the Louisenstrasse, dine at Hartwich's, and be at Weidner's punctually at eight—you know the place, in the Canalstrasse, where there was a great popular meeting the other day.—We chose the house in the first instance after due reflection on the great beer question. . . . You smile? Do not underrate the infinite importance of a good tap of beer! If the ancients had but drunk beer the incursion of the Goths and Vandals would not have led to such fatal issues! But this is parenthetical.—It is a settled thing; I fetch you at half-past six."

"You really are most kind," said Otto.

He had meanwhile replaced the cover for "Sophonisba" on the table. "Good-day, Fräulein Martha," he said in an undertone; but the girl's response was almost inaudible, and Otto, shaking his head, followed the professor who had gone on.

Wellner could not in any way account for the sudden changes in Martha's career. At first a

waitress in the Golden Anchor at Gernsheim, then a gay and well-dressed young lady, driving in a carriage through the most fashionable streets of the city—and now gilding book covers for 6 or 8 marks a week! These were vicissitudes greater and more sudden than any in the early life of the most famous *parvenues*.

Half an hour later the two men once more found themselves in the open air. Salomon had returned to the subject of Kurt Ewald, and Otto enquired how it was that the author of "Sophonisba" had got his work published by so distinguished a firm, if he were a man of such second-rate talent.

"My dear fellow," said the professor, "do you really imagine that merit alone strikes the balance in such matters? Ewald is one of those writers who can do no actual discredit to a publishing firm; besides, he has a fine fortune and his father is on the town-council. On such a basis an agreement is easily drawn up. Ewald himself, of course, backs the loss.—Well, enough of that!—Now you have to go to work again till one. *Χαῖρε, ὦ φίλτατε!* I, for my part, feel a distinct craving for an early draught of palatable liquor.—Half-past six—do not forget." And he left his companion.

Otto spent the rest of the day in his usual occupations; Doctor Wolf left the office at half-past five, and when Salomon, faithful to his promise, went in an hour later, Otto sighed to find that he had spent that hour in idly brooding over his latest adventures. All power of will seemed to have died out in him under the enervating influence of aimless dreaming. Matters were not better, but worse, during these days of solitary seclusion. Perhaps he had not taken the wisest course; perhaps it would have been safer and braver to defy Lucinda's power over him; perhaps, with time, he might get accustomed to her dazzling presence. To-morrow would be Saturday; should he venture? On the day of the betrothal Doctor Lehrbach had said to him: "We are always at home on Saturdays; when you have nothing better to do let us have the pleasure of seeing you . . . ."

Professor Salomon broke the thread of his meditations; but the passionate desire which had presented itself to his consideration under the mask of an agreement with his conscience, had gained so firm a footing that Otto had in fact no doubt as to the issue.

The two men walked at an easy pace to the Louisenstrasse, and after taking a few turns up

and down, went into the well-known restaurant where Salomon dined every Friday before the meeting of the Authors' club. Otto had quite ceased to consider whether the luxuries forced upon him by circumstances were compatible with his slender means. Such reflections seemed to him so trivial, so pitiful! Things must take their course; when his pockets were empty extravagance must cease; that was all.

But in spite of this apathetic frame of mind he was somewhat startled at seeing the flowing mane of his fellow-lodger, Roderich Lund, stooping over the centre table, which was brilliantly laid with silver and glass — and in the very act of engulfing an oyster.

"Can I believe my eyes?" said Otto, laying his hand on the poet's shoulder.

"You can," replied Roderich, wiping his lips. "The Chablis here is capital, and the oysters — miraculous! It is seven years since I tasted them last. Take a seat, Herr Professor — if you can condescend to dine at the same table with a man who is nothing but a poet."

"You are in error, my dear Herr Lund," replied Salomon, while a sleek waiter pulled him out of his coat, not without some difficulty. "It is my calling and duty, I admit, to attack the

productions of literary dilletanti with all my might and main, but I always show due respect to true talent. At the same time I am surprised to see you drinking wine; you should leave that to novelists and song-writers!" and taking a seat he called for a glass of *Export-beer* and the bill of fare.

"But do tell me . . . " Otto began, turning to Roderich.

"I quite understand," said the poet. "You are wondering how I came here, out of my attic in the Sandgasse, to eat oysters and drink French wine! It is simple enough. The director of the Stadt theater has read my nearly-finished tragedy, has accepted it, and paid me in advance three hundred marks on account of my share. Herr von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe was good enough to send me the information and handed me the money this morning. Now I think it only right to celebrate so important an event by a solemn act of feeding."

Otto had never heard his poet talk so recklessly and gaily; a quite boyish delight sparkled in his eager eyes which too often shone with a Medusa-like vindictiveness against society and its institutions.

"What!" said Salomon, raising his glass of

beer. "Three hundred marks on account? But, excuse my saying so, such a thing is unheard of! Besides—pardon my frankness—it is absolutely irrational! If your 'Gracchus' should be a failure—I know, I know, but the greatest masterpieces have been known to fail—it will not bring in three hundred marks!—And Leuthold, who is caution and close-fistedness personified! Do you mean to say that he has paid a perfectly unknown writer—do not take it ill—three hundred marks on account of his share of purely imaginary profits? Those may understand it who can! The golden age of literature seems to have dawned with a vengeance. Well, enough of that! I can only congratulate you on this stupendous event in a mighty draught!" And he emptied his glass to the last drop.

"Thank you," said Lund. "Luck is a man's only friend; and I think you must admit that luck has not come to me prematurely. I have waited long enough for it."

"How do you like the baron?" asked Otto after a pause.

"He is a genius!" cried Roderich enthusiastically. "I have read 'Gracchus' through to him twice; the effect was immense."

"In what respect?"

"Well, he did not say a word; he sat, stricken dumb in his arm-chair, with his hands folded and his eyes closed, as if he were saying his prayers."

"Well, and what then?" said Salomon.

"When I had done he rose and took my hand, and said with much emphasis: 'Your Gracchus will make its way.'"

"Slightly oracular!" observed the doctor.

"On the contrary — very positive, as it struck me."

"Have you called often?" asked Otto.

"Four times. The man has a way with him — I assure you no human being has ever manifested at all the same interest in me. He asks me about everything: my history, my family, my habits — my connections at home, and my acquaintances here in the city . . . The smallest details seem to interest him. He even made me describe my room and my fellow-lodgers. God knows my biographer in the future cannot be more exact."

"Indeed!" said Otto meditatively.

"Well, well," growled Salomon, "I only hope you may long live and flourish, a man among men, by the side of this magnificent patron. So far as I am concerned the gentleman does not

appeal to my sympathies . . . A conservative, as he professes to be . . . ."

"What?" exclaimed the poet. "I am telling you a thousand things that go to prove his enlightened Liberalism—and you assert . . . ."

The entrance of the waiter, with the dinner ordered by Salomon and Wellner, put an end to the discussion; by the time the professor had laid down his fork and poured his fourth glass of beer down his throat, it was time to adjourn to Weidner's Brewery.

"Are not you coming?" he said to Lund. "To the Authors' club meeting I mean."

"Not this evening," laughed Roderich.

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot be present when my election is being officially debated. A few hours ago I made a formal application to the committee."

"Really! I am heartily glad to hear it; you shall have my whitest ball at once—but of that you were *a priori* certain. Well then, till we meet again a fortnight hence at Weidner's, unless chance brings us together before then."

He pulled his hat low over his furrowed brow and quitted the room with Otto.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN the two men entered the "Hall of the Gods" — as it was nicknamed — at Weidner's Brewery, they found a party of twelve or fifteen already assembled; among them the president, Franz Keyser, and the editor of the "Glocke" who was seated on the left of that favorite author of archæological romances. The "Hall of the Gods" a comfortably furnished room, was so named, not in flattering allusion to the worshipful company who, for nearly two decades, had met here, week after week; but by reason of two statues which sat perched on tall plinths on each side of a huge mirror.

Salomon introduced the visitor to the president; Doctor Keyser shook hands warmly with the editor of the "Encyclopedia," but only bowed to Otto, with marked coolness. Then he sat down again, and drank a deep draught from the tankard presented to him by the club on his fiftieth birthday. The president was extremely reserved in his manner even to Dr. Wolf, whose seat was always next to his own. Otto remembered the

refusal with regard to "Melting Outlines." Perhaps Doctor Keyser had taken it amiss.

Doctor Salomon now introduced his friend to the rest of the gentlemen sitting round the table. Foremost of all sat Kurt Ewald, the "Messiah of the German stage," as Salomon had called him, his light hair combed with unfailing precision in a straight fringe over his forehead, dressed in black, just as Otto had seen him at Oberhorchheim, and wearing sleeve-buttons of such magnitude as cast the old ones quite into the shade. A repellent line, partly of ill-humor and partly of contempt, marked his chiselled lip; it gave the author of Sophonisba an expression of being constantly on the lookout for attacks from ignorant dullards who might feel inclined to regard Gutzkow's "Uriel Acosta" as a more successful effort than Ewald's unborn or still-born tragedies. And his crude, metallic voice had a critical snarl in it, even when he only gave an order to the waiter or discussed the weather.

"Of course, I forgot," said Salomon, "you gentlemen have met before at Oberhorchheim — a mutual pleasure; we were speaking of it only to-day. Well twice sure — if so trivial an expression is not profane as applied to so great an occasion. Allow me — Herr Otto Wellner of Halldorf...."

And he proceeded to name, in their order, the rest of the members of the club — names which, for the most part, Otto had never heard in his life before.

The room was filling; by degrees about thirty men collected, who sat round the table, all drinking Weidner's famous beer out of burly glasses. The rubicund countenance of Josef Kochansky, among others — he had come as a guest introduced by the editor of some minor paper — beamed over the tankard, while one of the versatile scrivener's fat hands faithfully clasped the inseparable pocket-book with the metallic pencil, as if he expected at any moment to receive some literary commission, either in the popular style of "Mother's Love," or for a higher and more academical class of readers.

At half-past eight the president rang his bell. "*Silentium*, gentlemen!" roared Salomon, when its tinkle failed of its effect. The buzz of conversation sank and then ceased, but that Kurt Ewald, who must always assert himself, after all the rest were silent had a critical remark to make on "the everlasting debating" which was now about to begin.

The bell rang a second time; Doctor Franz Keyser pronounced the meeting opened; he wel-

comed the guests in a short speech — there were two Danish authors present, besides Wellner and Kochansky — and then proceeded to dispose of the order of the day. The subjects under discussion were for the most part of domestic interest — arrangements for a Founder's festival soon to be held; certain alterations in the by-laws; addresses from foreign societies, and other uninteresting matters. The president led the proceedings with a certain amount of tact, though the manner in which he now and then reprimanded a slight breach in the formal conduct of business betrayed some irritation. Once indeed, when Doctor Willibald Kühner — a lengthy and excessively nervous private tutor — made a rather sharp reply, they were on the very verge of an indignant contest; this disaster was only averted by the intervention of Meyer von Bühl, the poet of the lion-beard, who was sitting next to Kühner, and who coaxed him with paternal good-nature to hold his peace and drink his beer.

But a fatal star was certainly in the ascendant; there was an atmosphere of misunderstanding and disharmony over all the proceedings. Even the voting as to the Founders' festival gave rise to an unpleasant and long-winded discussion; then some of the members took offence because Kurt Ewald

moved an adjournment in somewhat sarcastic terms; this led to fresh arguments, misapprehensions and differences.

The storm reached a climax when, after the order of the day was disposed of, Roderich Lund's election became the subject of discussion. Doctor Keyser officially announced the poet's candidature, and invited those of the members who were in a position to give the meeting any information about him to speak freely. Doctor Salomon was the first to meet the challenge.

"Gentlemen," he began with parliamentary dignity, "I believe that I am justified in warmly recommending the gentleman whose application has just been laid before you. I may honestly confess that I am not competent to pronounce an opinion on his literary talents; I have not read the works of Herr Roderich Lund; but I feel that I may, *a priori*, rate his merits as a poet very highly. Herr Lund is a man of academical culture, with a broad apprehension of the great problems of the age. I have twice been so happy as to have an opportunity of convincing myself of this, for twice here, in our club, I have sat by his side at this table. I therefore am of opinion that Herr Roderich Lund will be a most acceptable acquisition to our *Convivium*."

"Herr Kurt Ewald speaks next," said the president.

"Gentlemen," began the poet of "Sophonisba," and he wrinkled up his low, befringed brow, "I am of opinion that the words of my esteemed friend, who has just sat down, contain no real recommendation whatever. Even if Herr Lund is a pleasant and chatty companion, even if he could worthily imitate the professor's example and keep time with him in the consumption of liquor, I cannot esteem that a sufficient reason for his being solemnly enrolled as a member of an association of literary men. Herr Doctor Salomon has told us that his candidate's works are unknown to him; well, gentlemen, we are all in the same predicament, from Alpha to Omega — Lund! — who is Lund? I always thought that a man must have done something before he could venture to knock at the door of our Society. I am bound to confess that Herr Lund only impressed me as an absolutely insignificant person. I sat at no great distance from him, and what I heard fall from his lips never rose above the level of commonplace. Let us be exclusive if we are anything! The man whose ambition it is to be one of us must be really an author, must show us something in some degree worthy to be called

literature; he must have a name — not world-famous I grant, but still a name! I shall therefore register my vote against the election of Herr Roderich Lund."

Kurt Ewald's confession of faith was interrupted several times by cries of "hear, hear," or of dissent. The president now invited Doctor Wolf to speak.

"I have only to rectify a slight error on the part of my friend, the last speaker," said the soft tenor voice. Its tones fell on the reeking atmosphere as though a whiff of air from a drawing-room had come into a tavern, so calm and finished were the speaker's gesture and manner, so delicate and refined were his accent and language. — "Gentlemen, I believe that our respected associate, Herr Ewald, has misapprehended the tenor of our constitution. The by-laws contain nothing that can be interpreted to imply that election can depend on any greater or lesser degree of literary distinction. . . ."

"Quite true!" — on all sides.

"And besides," continued Doctor Wolf, with a subtle infusion of irony, "whether a shrub be a few feet higher or lower, it must still remain a dwarf by the side of an ancestral oak; and so, gentlemen, I am of opinion that the shrubs will do

well to bear each other's company, for only union can make them strong, and close array render them conspicuous. Thus, if there is nothing to be said against Herr Lund but that he is not a genius — well, I think we shall do well to beat our breasts in due humility and bid him enter."

These last remarks, as proceeding from one of the most gifted and successful writers in the society, on whom such humiliation sat but lightly, had a most irritating effect on many of the members, and especially on Doctor Keyser and 'the Messiah of the German stage.' Doctor Keyser, however, controlled himself; but Kurt Ewald at once claimed the privilege of speaking again, and declared that Doctor Wolf's expressions debased the club to the level of a refuge for the destitute— so much so that an author who had any self-respect must henceforth consider whether he could even continue to belong to such a society. So far as Herr Roderich Lund was concerned — who had amateurishness not to say cretinism written on his face — he could only reiterate his motion against his election, as nothing had as yet been said that could weigh at all in his favor.

Otto Wellner now rose.

"I do not know, Mr. President," he began with great modesty, "whether the constitution of

your Society allows a visitor to make a few remarks."

"Certainly, by all means!" said several voices. Doctor Keyser bit his lips and turned over his papers rather nervously.

"The case is not provided for by our by-laws," he stammered, and he knit his brows. "However, if the meeting is agreed. . . ."

"Of course, no doubt about it," cried several.

"Very good; then as no one objects, our guest, Herr Wellner, is at liberty to address the meeting."

In his excitement Otto had drained his beer-glass to the last drop; now he began in a low voice which, however, grew firmer as he went on:

"I must first express my thanks to your Society for giving me the opportunity of speaking in favor of a man whom, during my short residence in this capital, I have learnt to regard, not only as a man of very lovable qualities, but as a really eminently gifted poet. I can have no motive for desiring in any way to invalidate the supremacy of your Society, and I should have refrained from even expressing an opinion, if Herr Roderich Lund had simply been excluded by being black-balled. But since — so far as I can see — only one member considers him unworthy

of election, and that on the ground of personal antipathy, I cannot but believe that the Society will thank me for assuring them that I am well acquainted with a drama by Herr Lund, that in my opinion — which is of course not authoritative — that drama is one of the most remarkable literary productions of the last decade, and finally, that the word 'cretinism,' used by Herr Ewald, is an insult which I, in my friend's name, deeply resent."

He sat down; a vague murmur rose from the assembly. The young man's resolute demeanor had made an impression, though it seemed doubtful for the present whether it were favorable or unfavorable.

The president's bell put an end to the little disturbance. Doctor Keyser felt himself compelled to remark that Herr Otto Wellner had expressed an opinion on matters relating so exclusively to the domestic affairs of the club that the criticism of a visitor could not affect them. He would call on Herr Kurt Ewald to speak next.

Ewald rose with a smile of sovereign contempt on his thin lips, and the long, bony fingers of his right hand drummed lightly on the lid of his tankard, as though the whole business was far beneath the sublime heights of his Olympian dignity. He seconded the observation made by the

president; defended the use of the word "cretinism" as conveying only an objective, and perhaps a hyperbolical reflection, but in no degree an offensive one; and then expressed a doubt as to Wellner's competency to judge of the merits of the most important tragedies brought out during the last ten years. He went on in measured tones:

"I must crave your patience yet a few minutes longer; I will be as brief as possible. — Gentlemen: I foresaw this discussion. Professor Salomon's wish to introduce his candidate could not indeed be withstood. I made it, therefore, a point of conscience to make some enquiries into the social relations of Herr Roderich Lund. Accident led me to some very interesting discoveries; I will not dwell on accessory facts: one will suffice. Herr Roderich Lund is personally allied with the most flagrant members of the socialist agitation, and is, in a word," — and here the poet's voice grew ominously louder, "an individual whose acquaintance is a discredit to any man calling himself a gentleman. I reserved this statement, because I hoped to prevent Herr Lund's election without making it; but his friend's advocacy has driven me to it — and you know now what you have to reckon with."

Otto had started to his feet; with his clenched

hand leaning on the table he fixed a piercing eye on Ewald.

"I beg to be allowed to speak," he said in a voice of thunder. But Keyser raised a deprecating hand. It might mean prohibition or merely postponement of Otto's reply. Otto accepted it as a postponement, and controlled himself by a strong effort, but it was a hard task to subdue his boiling blood. The fire of fanatical possession which had been kindled in him by Meynert's hysterical fervor was concentrated as if in the focus of a magnifying lens. "What!" said he to himself, "shall this specimen of pompous ineptitude close the door on such a genius as Roderich Lund? And that simpleton, with his fringe and his jewelled cuff-buttons, calls my friend a man whom it is a discredit to know? And am I to listen and say nothing?"

He was firmly convinced at this instant of the reality of his devoted friendship for the author of "Gracchus," though, as a matter of fact, they were not particularly intimate. Otto had been too much absorbed in his own feelings and varying phases of mind for that. He was too much carried away by his latest impressions to consider with due calmness whether Ewald's words were not, in fact, the outcome of a reasonable convic-

tion. He regarded Eleonora von Sunthelm's eulogist as incapable of an opinion; the adorer of such an odious woman roused his aversion, and he attributed Ewald's antagonism to Lund to a base outburst of envy. It did not occur to him that Kurt Ewald thought far too well of himself to think of an unknown man like Roderich Lund as a conceivable rival. Besides, the author of Sophonisba—setting aside his extravagant deference to the wishes of persons of aristocratic rank—was by no means a man of base impulses; on the contrary, his mania for literary greatness was always subservient to the motto: "Noblesse oblige." His vehement attack on the writer of "Gracchus" had not been prompted by malice, but by the time-honored hatred of a conservative for a partisan of the revolutionary movement.

Doctor Keyser felt himself called upon to censure the form in which Herr Ewald had couched his objections and his information, though he entirely shared his opinions. A member of a party whose banner was flaunted in the face of all existing institutions, could never, under any conditions, be allowed to cross the threshold of a literary and artistic society whose effort and progress were so inseparably allied with the healthy development of social order on a firm basis.

To this the editor of the "Glocke" replied that he made a distinction between theoretical socialism, which he laughed at, and practical socialism, which he abominated. The former was a spectre, a vision, which haunted the brains of half-educated youth, but was, at bottom, as incoherent as the materialism of certain young chemists who, as soon as they had succeeded in turning a few strips of litmus-paper blue and red, believed they had solved the secrets of the universe. As to the point at issue, he entirely agreed in the views expressed by the president.

Still Otto Wellner had not gained a hearing. He listened to all these *pros* and *cons* with growing irritation, for in his eyes, they had no bearing on the marrow of the matter; the insult, that is to say, that he had received from Ewald. The blood mounted to his temples as Ewald again rose to speak with the same repellent irony, and after a brief preface, addressed partly to the president and partly *at* Otto, asserted the right of every member of the club to call "a spade a spade." He must therefore maintain and abide by everything he had said with reference to Herr Roderich Lund.

Every eye was now fixed on Otto; the young man was quivering with anger. Had he not dis-

tinctly explained that Roderich Lund was his fellow-lodger and his friend? He saw Ewald's words in the light, not merely of a coarse reflection on Lund, but of a personal and deliberate affront.

"Gentlemen," he said with forced calmness: "In my opinion, an insulting comment on an absent man — such as Herr Ewald has uttered and repeated — is a base and cowardly thing. With this observation I shall, for the present, take my leave of your honorable Society."

A tremendous hubbub at once broke out. Doctor Wolf shook his ambrosial curls with a look of regret; Professor Salomon shrugged his shoulders as much as to say: "Boys, boys, where are your tact and breeding?" Doctor Keyser tinkled his bell incessantly.

Wellner was standing by the side table, settling his reckoning with the waiter. As he quitted the room, peace was so far restored that his adversary's sharp voice was again audible.

"Does any one here happen to know that amiable gentleman's address?" asked Ewald with a fierce scowl. "I had no wish to make our club the scene of the punishment the fellow so richly deserves—but he shall have my answer to-morrow."

Otto was beside himself; he turned and came back to the table.

"I am at your service," he said struggling for breath. "Here is my card."

In his rage he would have liked to fling a challenge in the teeth of the whole assembly. He could think of nothing better than to stand forth and proclaim that he, like Lund, was an advocate of the programme of the Revolutionary party, and that he was prepared to support that programme — against any man — with his blood.

"So now, gentlemen," he ended, "now you know me; and if anything I have said displeases either of you you can let me know! Yours to command!"

He pulled his hat over his brow with rude indignation and quitted the room.

Salomon jumped up.

"This is preposterous!" he exclaimed as he thrust his arms into his overcoat. "Meynert's firebrand seems to have found fuel with a vengeance. The man was excited to start with .... Why he is capable — I must be after him, at once. Do not take it amiss, friend Ewald, but you really are partly to blame for this unpleasant scene. Well, we must hope the affair can be arranged!"

"Pray do not trouble yourself, my good friend!" said Kurt Ewald.

But the professor had rushed off; he overtook Otto, who was still tremulous with rage, at the corner of the next street.

"My dear Herr Wellner," he exclaimed laying his hand on Otto's shoulder, "what is the meaning of this unpleasant dispute! If the affair is not immediately arranged Herr Ewald will send a friend to call on you to-morrow morning, and you will be in the most awkward predicament. . ."

"How so?"

"Well, one of two things: either you refuse the challenge . . . ."

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am only stating the alternatives. — Either you refuse the challenge — and nothing can be more disastrous — or else you accept it."

"Do not be uneasy," interrupted Otto, "I will fight."

"Very good; that is the second alternative. But you must admit that it also has its disadvantages. Apart from the affair itself and its possible issue, do you really think that an ultra radical — for that is what you proclaimed yourself before the *corona civium* — can set up as the champion of Utopian visions — since that, after all, is the whole question in dispute—by means which are the extreme outcome of old world feudalism? Your

acceptance of this challenge implies the recognition of a mediaeval tradition which, from your point of view, must be actually reprobate. You want to prove yourself an advocate of revolution, and you play the part of an aristocrat. The situation is crucial! fatal to all logic! — Well, as I said, I can only hope the matter may be arranged. What was it that put you into such a tremendous passion? After all, you are not married to Roderich Lund.— And besides — you will believe me when I say that I do not pander to conservative reaction; but your programme, as you call it! — Your nature is impressionable, your apprehension quick and happy, but, between ourselves— and you must forgive my frankness — I do not think that your experience in politics and your knowledge of the working class are wide enough to enable you to form an adequate judgment of socialist doctrines and dogmas. The other evening, after Meynert's speech, I endeavored in a few words to demonstrate the sophistry of his arguments — to my great regret you had gone away.

"But do you know it is half-past ten already. You are too excited to be left to yourself: I shall have you preaching rebellion in the open streets!— Come with me; I am not much in the mood for beer; my housekeeper brews first-rate grog, and

we will talk matters over and consider what I can do for you . . . at any rate I am at your service as your second."

"I am truly grateful and accept your kind offer. I am entirely without experience in such matters. . . ."

"Well, well; we will hope it may not come to that. We will first calm our souls with grog. About midnight you shall put a copy of my prize treatise in your pocket, a rather thick pamphlet: 'On the Errors of Socialism and the means of combating them.' I flatter myself that will cool you down."

The worthy philosopher's kindly geniality had, as usual, a soothing and clearing influence on Otto's mood. He followed Salomon to his snug bachelor's quarters, and meditatively drank a tumbler of punch brewed by the astonished housekeeper, who knew that the meetings of the Author's club lasted, not unfrequently, till four or five in the morning. Then he promised to read the pamphlet from beginning to end, without prejudice and with due attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

THREE times had Frau Lersner knocked at Otto Wellner's door, at intervals of a quarter of an hour, without waking the sleeper. It was not till the fourth time that he bestirred himself. He felt wearied and beaten. There was a grip at his heart that seemed almost physical — the impression left perhaps by some wild and painful dream. He looked at his watch; it was past ten. Outside, the sun was shining on the frosted roofs, and the sky was as blue as in May; but Otto had no eyes just now for the beauties of nature. He got up and dressed, vexed to find that it was so late. Just after the occurrences at the Author's club he would have given anything rather than be unpunctual in his duties.

As always happens when one starts thus handicapped, all sorts of accidents came to embitter his aggrieved mood. He upset an inkstand and stained his portfolio and table-cover; then, for a wonder, Frau Lersner kept him waiting for his breakfast; and then came a letter from Karl Theodor Heinzius, vexatious in its tenor, and

doubly so at a moment when Otto had not time to read it with composure. It informed him that after a series of circumstances, which the worthy man related with the minutest detail, he had made up his mind to resign his position as teacher in the school at Halldorf. Finally Heinzius begged his friend's forgiveness for never having alluded again, till now, to the subject of the sealed packet. In spite of the various worries of these few weeks he had often thought of that strange will, but he must frankly confess that he was no less puzzled and helpless in the matter than Otto himself.

When he had read the twelve pages of the pedagogue's letter Otto rushed down stairs in furious annoyance. On the first-floor landing, the darkest in the house, he met a clumsy, coarse-looking man who squeezed himself as close against the wall as he could; there was something strange in this singular attempt at evasion.

"Whom are you looking for here?" asked Wellner going up to the man, and even as he spoke a wild spasm of rage boiled in his veins . . . he had recognized the sneaking ruffian. It was Ephraim Peltzer, the wretch who had insulted the fair Lucinda and revenged himself so meanly on her champion.

"Whom do you want?" repeated Otto taking the man by the breast of his coat.

Peltzer gripped Otto's wrist.

"Am I bound to tell you?" he growled surlily.

Something in Peltzer's touch, he knew not what, drove Otto to frenzy. He felt as though this man were the incarnation of all that was hateful on earth. In the same instant he had clutched the bully's throat.

"I will not have a scoundrel like you lurking about the house," he said hoarsely. "Answer me this minute or I fling you down stairs. Indeed, without waiting for that . . . ."

"Will you leave go?" gasped Peltzer who was being strangled. "I am going to Fräulein Jakoby . . . ."

Wellner let go, ashamed of his murderous fury. If Doctor Lehrbach, if Lucinda could have seen him in such a temper! Ephraim Peltzer, who was strongly built, had only to defend himself in earnest to give rise to an ugly scuffle, a low fight!

"Fräulein Jakoby is not at home," he said more calmly. "Now take yourself off. I cannot imagine what she can want of you."

Peltzer shook himself free with a violent push, and ran down stairs like a wild cat.

"Curse you!" he cried, "but you shall hear of me again, and I will be even with you next time."

He got out of the house, clenching his fists and grinding his teeth. Otto stood still a minute, lost in thought; Peltzer's accent was one of such vicious hatred that an uncomfortable shudder ran through the young man. However, he was perhaps a little nervous to-day; it was absurd to let the impression of the moment affect him so strongly — it was his own stupid humor that weighed upon him. What was there hanging over him? This senseless squabble with Herr Ewald — and the possible result! A bullet in his brain! In this mad world, where the happiness of the individual was held of such small account, was it worth while to be doleful over such a prospect?

"Ridiculous!" he said to himself; and he went down stairs.

When Otto reached the office he found the editor-in-chief in the midst of the edifying scenes of the visitor's hour. Doctor Wolf greeted him with a kindly nod, and when he had disposed of his, for the most part aimless, clients he came slowly up to Otto's desk.

"Well," he said raising his brows, "has Herr von Tyllichau been to see you?"

"Why should he?"

"Oh! I thought that was the cause of your being late. Your adversary took council of Herr von Tyllichau last night. The affair threatens to be serious."

Otto shrugged his shoulders. At this moment Klaus, the messenger, brought in a card.

"For Herr Wellner," he said with a grin; for he, of course, had heard of the dispute.

Otto took the card and read: "Eric, Baron von Tyllichau-Sassnitz, Lord of the Manor of Tyllichau-Sassnitz and Niederbuseck, Lieutenant of the Reserve."

He glanced enquiringly at his chief.

"Show the gentleman in by all means," said Wolf, retiring to his own table.

Herr von Tyllichau-Sassnitz came in with the solemn, not to say tragical air which a man of the world puts on when engaged in conducting an affair of the kind. He bowed gravely to both the gentlemen at once, and then turned ceremoniously to Wellner.

"I deeply regret being obliged to disturb you here," he began in politely subdued tones, "but I thought I should be most certain of finding you at your office; and as the business which brings me admits of no delay . . . ."

Otto had risen as the baron came in and returned his bow with no less formality.

"You have come from Herr Kurt Ewald?" he asked smoothly.

"In point of fact . . . ."

"I told Herr Ewald last evening that I was entirely at his orders. May I ask you to discuss all the particulars with Herr Professor Doctor Salomon, whom you will probably find over the way in his own study? Doctor Salomon was good enough to undertake the affair on my behalf . . . ."

"Thank you very much," said Eric von Tyllichau bowing again. "Then I have nothing further to detain you about. Pardon the intrusion . . . ."

And the baron withdrew, with that delightful chivalrous ease which Otto had already envied him in the garden of the Golden Anchor.

In a minute or two he was seated in the encyclopedist's work-room, and was submitting to his consideration Kurt Ewald's challenge to Otto Wellner.

In justice to the young baron it must be said that he was not one of those men who find a sportsman's delight in fomenting the provocations to a duel. When he and Salomon had discussed

the matter thoroughly they shook hands, promising each other that before nightfall some arrangement should, if possible, be arrived at. Salomon suggested a compromise: Both the antagonists should retract and apologize for their words in the presence of the members at the next meeting of the club, and Ewald should take the initiative. Tyllichau required that Otto should be the first to recant, but Salomon stood out; at last however he pledged himself to do his best to persuade Wellner to accept these terms, provided of course, that Tyllichau would bring him the positive assurance that Ewald would follow suit. If these efforts should fail they could still, at the last moment, and on the ground fixed for the meeting — which was to take place next morning at ten — submit the question to the intervention of the umpire. Herr von Tyllichau was prepared to name one for Salomon's approval, a foreign officer, Lieutenant Clairvaux, the son of General Clairvaux. Doctor Föhrenstedt would act as surgeon in case of need; this was all for the present.

The baron took his leave and went off at once to Kurt Ewald, whom he found in a state of extreme nervous excitement. Wrapped in the ample folds of a grey silk dressing-gown, the poet of "Sophonisba" looked more like a suffering

patient than a man who is preparing to defy an adversary "at the pistol's mouth." Eric von Tyllichau was encouraged to hope that his proposals for mediation would fall on favorable soil. He was mistaken; Kurt Ewald, excessively provoked, and chock-full of the vapor of his own importance, would not listen to them for an instant. The final alternative Eric laid before him, he regarded simply as a guarantee of his adversary's cowardice. However, he would have defied the veriest fire-eater, so deeply had delayed success soured his temper, and so bitterly did this heaven-inspired genius hate everything that touched him too nearly.

"You have my last word," he said twirling his cigarette in his thin fingers. "I will teach the insolent upstart to dare to treat me as a coward and a sneak! My dear Tyllichau, I have not closed my eyes all night for sheer fury; I am quite worn out. So, for the present, a thousand thanks — and we meet again to-morrow. I will call for you punctually at ten."

Otto meanwhile was doing his day's work with rigid apathy; he eat his lunch at half-past one in the restaurant close by, and then, as usual, took a turn in the park. As the clock struck three he went back to his desk, and at half-past six made

his way home. Since Von Tyllichau's visit the whole business with Kurt Ewald had been buried in silence. One thought only seemed burnt into his soul: This evening, being a Saturday, he would spend, for the first time after many weeks, in Lucinda's drawing-room. He was more firmly resolved than ever not to avoid her enchantments, but on the contrary, to defy them as Odysseus defied the songs of the Syrens. An extraordinary piece of self-deception! He believed that he was acting honestly, bravely, and prudently, while all the time, he was blindly following the impulse of his own insatiable desires.

Otto was the first to arrive. He was half-ashamed of being so early, as though it must betray his secret to every one, and he colored as his kind patron received him. Doctor Lehrbach, with unfailing heartiness, led him to his wife who slowly rose from her seat. She was as fair as a goddess of beauty — in that heavenly white as usual, a rich velvet of faint cream-color, and spotless frail camellias in her hair — and that bewitching smile! But, strange to say, that smile was not quite the same as usual. There was a suspicion of embarrassment in her lovely face, a shadow, an unaccountable something. Could she guess the turmoil in the young man's breast? Did she pity

him? He asked for no pity! "A nineteenth century Werther!" was what he said to himself.—The thought was unendurable.

"You have not given us this pleasure for a long time," said the lawyer; "to be sure there are other and better amusements — the Author's club for instance. . . ."

"Indeed!" murmured Otto.

"I have heard the whole story. I met some acquaintances this afternoon at the Café Bernburg. God knows what brought up the subject — however, every one is talking about it, less out of interest on your behalf, as you are little known, than on your opponent's. Kurt Ewald is, as you know, one of our *jeunesse dorée*, though the gilding — so far as his exterior is concerned — is getting a little worn. Between ourselves, he is perfectly intolerable, and I am only too glad that he should for once have found his match. Only one thing puzzled and surprised me: every one says that your quarrel was on a question of politics. Herr Wellner — so I was told in the divan — is an ardent social democrat, capable of anything; and he dared to accuse the son of one of our best families of cowardice because Herr Ewald thought proper to adhere to some conservative utterance.— I laughed in the man's face; but then another

came in with the same story and a second and a third and a fourth! It is certainly very odd, and you will be wise to clear up the misunderstanding at once."

Otto had not a word at command; the idea that rumor had already branded him as a martyr to the cause of revolution, and had eliminated all the personal details of his quarrel, abashed and dismayed him.

"You see," Lehrbach went on, "the thing stands thus: I was speaking yesterday to Von Düren; the position you at present hold as sub-editor of the 'Glocke' is quite unworthy of your talents. Doctor Wolf says the same, and has made every effort to second my exertions. My father-in-law still hesitates for a variety of small reasons, but in reality he is not ill-disposed. You have every reasonable hope of finding yourself promoted after the New Year to the second place in the office. Your salary will not, indeed, be greatly raised, but your position on the paper will be greatly improved — and if Doctor Wolf should resign, which is exceedingly probable, as he has lately come into a good fortune and means to marry, your chances are of the very best."

"What?" said Otto. "You have done all this for me —? Oh, you overwhelm me with shame!"

"Nonsense! The whole trouble it has given me consists in two or three visits to my father-in-law — a man may surely do that for his friend. But, as I said before, I am afraid that if Herr von Düren hears .... Well, even then I would go bail for the success of my plan; still, it would be better to stifle the report."

Otto sighed, remembering the duel. In his pocket lay the note from Doctor Salomon which told him that all attempts at mediation were vain. What rumors would fill the air when the issue of that squabble became known — when he should have wounded the champion of the conservative faith, or when Ewald's bullet had laid him low.

Added to these unpleasant reflections he was in a divided state of mind that grew every moment more embarrassing. His speech: "You overwhelm me with shame," had been no mere form of words. The extraordinary kindness heaped upon him by his friend was really oppressing him. This benefactor, this fatherly protector, whose house he frequented, not to show his gratitude and feed a flame of a pure regard, but to enjoy the consuming rapture of gazing at his enchanting wife...! He felt crushed by the weight of an unpardonable crime.

When, towards midnight, he returned to his

silent room, he felt more miserable and desperate than ever. Complications, hopeless chaos lay on every side.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER his brief struggle with Wellner Ephraim Peltzer had made himself scarce with the utmost promptitude. He stopped under the doorway of a neighboring house to pull himself straight, for Otto had dealt roughly with his collar and buttons; and any one who had known the man in former days would have wondered to see him so respectably dressed. In Gernsheim he had looked like a rough workman, wilfully indifferent to his appearance; but now he was a spruce and well-clad citizen. The necktie that Otto had pulled askew was of light-blue silk; his flowered waistcoat suggested suburban weddings and christenings, his coat and hat were both new. It was evident at a glance that some great change for the better had come upon Ephraim Peltzer's fortunes. Presently he emerged from the doorway and looked about him.

"Curse it all!" he growled between his teeth. "Who the devil could have expected to find that

d——d fellow at home? Everything else was as pat as you please; the verse-scribbler at Sunthelm's, the counter-Miss at the shop earlier than usual, the others engaged away from home.—It is maddening!"

For a few minutes he stood considering whether, now that Otto was gone, he should not return to the house and carry out his plans; but he decided that the risk was too great. Otto's suspicions had been roused; the excuse of an appointment with Adele Jakoby rested on too slight a basis. Nor was it impossible that Otto had only pretended to go to the office, and might suddenly come up stairs just as Peltzer was setting to work . . . In short, he judged it best simply to inform Baron Anastasius that he had failed on this occasion, and quote the proverb about a thing delayed not being lost. After all, there was no hurry. Who could tell whether if he had succeeded, Herr von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe would have been as free with his sky-blue bank notes as he was before? From that point of view Ephraim Peltzer had, so far, no cause for dissatisfaction. Even if the matter slipped through his fingers, if he failed altogether in his present undertaking, by making good use now of his time and of the baron's liberality, he might achieve a

grand project which he had been preparing for the last ten days with the wily persistency of a finished diplomatist.

Thus, perfectly satisfied with himself, he walked on at a comfortable pace. In the market he stopped to buy a bunch of violets and stuck them in his button-hole with smug complacency.

Although the butcher—if butcher he were—whose pocket-book Peltzer had appropriated, had entirely vanished—the theft had not even been advertised in the official police news—Peltzer's guilty instincts led him to avoid the busiest streets; he made a long round to his destination: the residence of Baron von Sunthelm. As he pulled the bell Roderich Lund came out of the house, his face flushed with pleased excitement. That incredible manager of the theatre had again sent him a sum of money on account of his share in the profits of "Gracchus," and had declared himself perfectly carried away by the dramatic power of the tragedy. The baron had added that unfortunately the manager was overwhelmed with business of all kinds; but for that, the baron would long ere this have given himself the pleasure of making the poet and Leuthold personally acquainted. It seemed wiser, however, to wait a little while; . . . . the piece would be placed on

the stage before the end of the season without fail, and there would be no need for any long discussion over it.

Roderich, in his enthusiastic gratitude, was a bad psychologist; he took the baron's word for gospel; his suspicions were not even roused by the mysterious conduct of the manager, who remained a veiled image in the temple of Thalia. Fired by the rapturous anticipations that thrill the nerves of a poet on the eve of certain success, he hurried through the streets aimless and radiant, smiling at every one, now and then attracting the attention of the street-boys who imitated his walk and gestures, shouting out all sorts of remarks which Roderich, in his intoxication, never dreamed of applying to himself. No earth-born thought troubled the Olympian serenity of his soul; he had not the faintest inkling of the scene between Wellner and Ewald, of which he had been the cause. To his immediate apprehension, existence was summed up in the performance of his tragedy in the great theatre.

Peltzer stared at him and grinned. "A rum chap!" said he to himself: then, with a condescending nod to the porter, he went in.

Peltzer had underrated the baron's business-talents if he thought him likely to continue *ad in-*

finitum the allowance which for some few weeks he had been paying his tool. Just as a Chinese nobleman pays his physician as long as he is well, but stops the salary from the day when he is taken ill, so Anastasius explained that, for the future, he should not pay for lost days, but hand over a lump sum when Peltzer should have accomplished the little service he had undertaken.

"As I have already told you," said the baron coolly in conclusion, "I have no object in view but the satisfaction of a perfectly innocent curiosity, a piece of impertinent indiscretion — connected, as I need not conceal, with a girl of humble rank. But the matter is not of such importance as to make me feel inclined to maintain a spy month after month. So you had better have the goodness to set to work with some degree of energy. If you succeed in abstracting the packet in question, intact, I will keep my word like a gentleman and pay down the sum agreed upon, on the spot. Till then, my friend, nothing more; absolutely nothing."

Peltzer left him. His irritation soon evaporated. To-morrow would be Sunday; to-morrow would very likely give him an opportunity of repairing his ill-fortune. Roderich, to be sure, always sat immovable at his desk on Sundays;

however, that crazy verse-wright was the least to be feared of all the inhabitants of the house. Well — time would show. He patted his well-filled purse, pulled out a watch, and noting the hour, went into an eating-house where he treated himself handsomely.

When it struck two he walked off southwards. Here among the high-gabled houses of the Fabriciustrasse, stood one of strange aspect. The first and second floors were occupied by old-clothes-dealers. Coats and paletots hung out of every window, and a mouldy vapor seemed to proceed from these squalid store-rooms. The whole street, indeed, was dull, dingy, and airless, and in the basement rooms quavering gas or smoky lamps were burning, even in broad daylight. On the ground-floor was a milk and coffee-shop. At the entrance, besides the sign, was a stamped leaden plate with the words: "G. Schulze, pawnbroker; money lent on valuables of every description." The pawnbroker and the milkman were one and the same person.

Peltzer, after a moment's hesitation, went straight into the coffee-room. Herr Schulze, a hunchback with closely-cropped hair and a very wrinkled face, was squatting on a turning-chair behind his counter. He looked up, and then re-

turned to his study of a cheap, penny-dreadful novel that lay in greasy fragments on the counter between butter and cheese. Peltzer crossed the yard to a house beyond, where he entered a dimly-lighted room. There, with a glass of evil-smelling spirits in his hand, sat a powerfully-built man, evidently in the last depths of destitution. His clothes were in tatters, his hair matted, his hands seemed stiff with dirt.

"At last!" he exclaimed, starting up, "you were to have been here at half-past one."

"Take it easy," said Peltzer. "But good God, man! Brönner, what an object you are! I am almost ashamed that such a beggarly. . . ."

"Ashamed! You may well be ashamed," interrupted Brönner. "No piper, no dance — no sheet, no bedclothes! Where am I to get anything from, you chattering fool? For the last ten days you have been trotting round the town with your nose in the air, like a dog scenting sausages. But all your snuffing does not fill my pocket, nor stay my stomach! If those sneaks of police were not so close at my heels outside, I should have been off long ago. But as it is, I should be nabbed before I could turn round. I have had enough of this I can tell you. From the heap of straw in the garret down to this beastly hole — and up

again at night, that is my day's amusement; Devil take it all I say!"

"Deuce take it, you do not suppose I am a conjuror," said Peltzer crossly. "Here — here are twenty marks. That will buy you a blouse and a shirt; but have done with that everlasting tippling. If you ever get out again you will want a steady hand, and a head too that is not bamboozled and fuddled with bad spirits."

"That is all very well," said the man. "First find me a job; then you shall see if my hand is steady and my head clear."

"Wait, I tell you, wait a bit!"

"Then you are sure that you will want the tools?"

"I hope so. Your old partner will never leave us in the lurch now. He has made us pay dear enough!"

"No song no supper! You cannot expect him to risk his neck without getting something handsome by the job."

He tossed off the spirits, shook himself, and then, wiping his mouth with his sleeve, he said:

"So far as I can see we are no for'arder to-day than we were last Monday."

"For'arder? Well I do not know. The plate

is a secondary consideration for the present; it is as safe up at Lähnert's as it would be in your mattress. Schulze is a sly fox and nothing can be proved against him, but the police might come on his tracks some fine day and take a fancy to look into his cupboards. Now Lähnert, a man of business. . . In short the thing is as good as done; but till I have come finally to terms with the girl. . . ."

"What?" interrupted Brönner, "I thought all that was settled!"

"To a certain point it is. She is beginning to understand, and though she had not actually said 'yes,' I see the thing is dawning on her, as you may say. . . ."

"A pack of nonsense — neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. . . ."

"Quite the contrary. Only I must be cautious. At first she would have nothing to say to me, treated it all as a joke; then, by degrees, I went a little further. I got to know her better and spoke more seriously. But as to a definite agreement — the Devil's in it, I must have time."

"The only wonder to me is that you have come round the little toad at all. I know her of old — a spoilt hussy and full of her airs. Besides, between ourselves, Peltzer, you are not a handsome

dog though you have taken to rigging yourself out lately like a Bavarian Whitsuntide ox."

"All a matter of taste," said Ephraim, shrugging his shoulders. "And at any rate I have made it clear that I know how to come round a pretty girl. At first, I never even thought of spying and watching; I went to call just like the rest of the danglers, and it was quite by accident that we first began to talk about the house and some good opportunity. God knows I was as innocent as a babe! The pretty little puss took my fancy, and as I happened to be up in the world, said I to myself: 'You may have a fling.' So I turned on some Champagne — and didn't she take to it kindly. . . ."

"I know; you told me. As to how much of it was true. . . ."

"You may believe just as much as you like but don't bother me with cross-questions."

"What questions have I asked you, gaby? I only said that I was astonished to think that the bewitching Fanny could be so far gone on you, of all men. It can only have been for your money, and now perhaps the splendid business you are going to set up."

"It is all the same to me. Do you suppose that any woman thinks first of kissing and cooing?

Not a bit of it! — they want to be treated and made much of, to get lots of finery and lead a jolly life; and the man who takes care to meet them half-way in these things pleases them better than any milksop beauty. Well, in short, I brought her round — she is still a little shy of giving us her personal assistance, but she blabs all she knows whenever I ask her. She is a born spy; I know the ways of all the house, from the old man down to the kitchen-maid; and only from her descriptions I know my way all over the place, as if I had been there a hundred times."

"Where do you talk to her?"

"In the garden, of evenings; at this time of year it is as quiet as the grave. The great gate opens into the Wallstrasse, and by ten o'clock there is not a soul passing. She lets me in, and for twenty minutes or more — according to circumstances — we wander up and down the broad walk."

"Not a bad way of spending the time neither; the little hussy is devilish pretty."

"So I think. — I tell you what; if everything turns out well. . . ."

"Well?"

"I shall take her with me. What do you say to that?"

"And marry her?"

"If I must — why not?"

"Hm. If she sticks by you. . . ."

"Oh! I am not afraid!" said Ephraim, with a complacent laugh.

"Well, it is not so sure. Do not trust her further than you can see her. Three years ago, before I ever saw you, we called her the 'Witch' down at the Corsohalle, because she was everywhere at once, and always had half a dozen chaps at her heels. She was not more than sixteen then, and she has learnt a good deal in three years. . . ."

Ephraim Peltzer stood meditative.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed: "You are right there; it is wonderful what a lot she knows; and laughs at every one. That reminds me — a week or two ago I caught her one evening, about eight, on the Schiller bridge — she was chattering and rattling and giggling — it was like a mill-wheel. Guess who it was she had hold of there at her apron-string."

"How the devil should I guess?"

"Mark you, I believe it was all fair play on her side. It is her nature to lark and flirt, and she never thinks twice about it. But I was surprised to see him, for I thought he had no time to go jigging after the girls."

"But who was it then?"

"Meynert."

"What! That jawing idiot?"

"Look out, and have the goodness to keep your hard names to yourself. There are plenty of idiots among his followers I grant you; but Meynert.—Heaven and Earth! He has taught the gentry to call a spade a spade!"

"All words!" replied Brönner. "He is no good, for all his jaw, and fine talk never filled a hungry man. I hate the whole windy crew of them. They go about bewailing the hardships of the working-man, robbed of his rights, while they put up at the best hotels and eat and drink like a king on Sunday! It is just thrashing straw."

"Well, I am not in the humor myself to speak up for Meynert, for I was not best pleased to see him holding the girl's hand and smirking in her face — desperately in love with her, I should say. Fanny explained it, to be sure, that same evening; Meynert, it seems, is a near relation of hers, so there was not much in it after all."

"Bless me! you seem to be very far gone over the little minx."

"Pooh! what do you mean by that?"

"At any rate, Meynert is married."

"Indeed! I did not know it."

"Oh yes! to a very good, hard-working wife — and he has five or six children."

"So much the better. I shall see Fanny this evening and I will drop a hint as to the wife and six children."

Peltzer rose.

"Stop a bit," whispered Brönner. "How much do you think this business will bring us when all is said and done?"

"More than you might think. Not so much in hard cash, of course; that is in the strong room at the office and there is not the slightest chance there. — But the diamonds alone are a perfect fortune — so Fanny tells me — and a hundred thousand or so in securities."

Brönner was meditating.

"I tell you what," he began after a pause: "If you could find out how the safe is constructed — on what principle I mean; so much depends on that. Just ask how the safe is fixed and secured . . . ."

"The safe?"

"Yes, the strong-box or cupboard in which the valuables are kept.— Did you never see a proper safe?"

"Never!"

"Stupid! — Well, one thing is very clear, we

must prepare for accidents. Above all, don't miss a good opportunity."

"It is sure to come, sooner or later . . . ."

"Sooner, let us hope. I cannot hold out much longer in this wretched sty. Anything rather than that."

"I will do my best. However, when once you have got the pot on you are sure to eat the stew at last. Have patience, and above all keep your tongue from wagging. I do not half trust that fellow Schulze.— Even if he only tries to squeeze us for the sake of a few thalers more in his own pocket,— still it will be better to keep him in the dark. Let him believe that I am your kind cousin and mean to pull you through under the very nose of the detectives. Anything more than that is best let alone. And look here, do not soak too much; drink is the very devil!"

"Never you fear," said the other. "Look out for yourself, you flashy Don Juan! — Free to go out in the sun and air — a good meal — and a gossip with Miss Fanny at night! Ah well, I will be even with you, if I only get out of this hole."

CHAPTER XIX.

It was still dark when Otto started into wakefulness that Sunday morning, from a strange, uncanny dream. He was at the place of meeting in the pale moonlight; suddenly Kurt Ewald, as he stood opposite to him, became a formless wreath of mist, a cloud-image through which his bullets passed without any effect. This fruitless struggle with an unnatural shape drove him to desperation—at last the pistol burst in his hand; with a cry of rage and pain he woke.

The nervous irritation left by his dream prevented his sleeping any more. For above an hour he tossed restlessly on his bed; then he struck a light. It was a quarter past five. He got up and put a match to the little heap of shavings which lay ready in the iron stove. The wood crackled and blazed, giving the room an appearance, at least, of comfort. It was bitterly cold; Otto threw on his greatcoat and curled himself into a corner of the sofa. His eye fell on Salomon's pamphlet. The title on the outside was printed in tall thin letters and under the influence of his dream they suggested the long-

drawn misty figure of Ewald. Thoroughly unnerved, he took up the pamphlet and turned over the pages. A passage caught his eye by the singularity of its arrangement in type; he read it, was surprised and interested, and tore open some of the following pages with a lead-pencil.

He felt tempted to study the "logical fallacies of socialism" with more attention, and taking out his pocket-knife he cut the whole of the pamphlet; then he drew the lamp close to him and proceeded to read.

The professor's article was by no means an original creation; but, though he was not one of the pioneers of his science, he was a worthy and competent exponent of its principles and present stand-point. His work was free from the bitterness which too often brings the discussion of a burning social question down to the level of vituperation; he pointed out, with academical rigor and irrefragable logic, where the fallacies of social democracy lay: namely, in the misapprehension of certain empirical facts, in calculating from imaginary factors, in the assumption of purely factitious psychological and social conditions, which never really existed and never could exist.

For the first time in his life Otto here found a great problem — which he had hitherto conceived

of merely as a struggle between contending forces of Will and Desire — discussed with unprejudiced fulness, *sine ira et studio*, solely from the point of view of a scientific enquirer who seeks the truth and nothing but the truth. The socialist theory was simply checkmated by the writer's comprehensive mastery of historical and philosophical facts and of political economy as a science.

Otto read on. The blackness of a foggy November morning began to yield to day before he laid down the pamphlet, his face tingling with excitement. His brief studies had sufficed to throw cold water on the fire of an enthusiasm which would have burnt itself out ere now but for the attitude forced upon him by Ewald. Otto was cured of his boyish eruption of Utopianism; all that was left of it was an oppressive sense of the tragi-comic aspect of the situation.

The situation was in fact tragi-comic enough.

Supposing it were possible now to avoid the meeting with Ewald, Otto could not doubt as to what interpretation the world would put upon his conduct. After all that had been said and done it was, very naturally, supposed that Wellner had taken up the quarrel as a champion of the revolutionary party. And though this view of the matter was erroneous from the first, now that Otto

had been so effectually convinced of the hollowness and futility of these dreams of social equality, its falsity seemed quite preposterous.

He sat a very long time, his burning face buried in his hands, till the feeble lamp was beginning to die out. He extinguished it, for broad day looked in through the frosted panes.

At eight his landlady brought him his breakfast; he forced himself to eat a few mouthfuls. He had quite fallen out with himself; he put himself under the ban, as it were, of ineptitude and illogical obtuseness.

Fritz Pröhle, who knocked at his door at half-past eight, came at a bad moment. Otto was not in the humor to feel any sympathy with other folks. He hardly offered the type-founder a seat. Pröhle, to be sure, took one all the same, and allowed nothing to check the flow of his confidences — his sorrows and his hopes. Otto yawned and groaned; Pröhle's long story was in fact of no immediate interest to him. Adele, and again Adele — her silvery laugh, how pretty she had looked when she went to the concert with Frau Lersner and Emma, in her fawn-colored dress with a plaid trimming and her splendid hair, and a gold cross round her neck . . . After the pæan came the usual elegy: She was far above him,

much too handsome . . . he a simple workman with heavy fists and clumsy manners.—It was miserable work! . . . Then, melting melancholy gave birth to suspicion and jealousy. Who had given her that gold cross? How had she come by it? She could hardly have bought it; it must have cost forty or fifty marks. Oh yes! he had asked her.—"A present from Herr Toussaint — a reward for good conduct to the best saleswoman."—Pooh! He was not going to be taken in by that. Those might believe it that chose; he, Pröhle, knew better. The head of a house of business did not sow prizes broadcast; there must be something at the bottom of it. — Presently his growling turned to wrath: only yesterday, quite by accident, he had discovered the scoundrel who had taken Adele to the play that night . . . It was the very man who had followed Herr Wellner home — of course it had been on account of Adele! An old baboon, a hoary villain! Was he not ashamed to risk the good name of an inexperienced girl?

Otto's attention was roused. Anastasius von Sunthelm seemed suddenly to have set his heart on scraping acquaintance with the whole household: first Otto, then Roderich and Adele and now, through Adele, the type-founder, were all beginning to regard the baron as a sort of petty

providence, ruling their various lots, now as a friend and now as a foe. Then Otto remembered Peltzer's visit. He was on the point of asking Pröhle whether the rascal had again attempted to get speech of Adele; but then, considering his companion's excited feelings, he thought it wiser perhaps to say nothing.

"It was he, was it!" he exclaimed. "Well, and how did it come about?"

"Exactly as before, only the street was rather more out of the way and the old sinner more in love than ever. And I can tell you, if I did not knock him down it was for two simple reasons; first my heart beat too fast, and then, when I had made up my mind and got my fists ready for the vermin, they vanished — disappeared into a house so quickly and unexpectedly that I had only time to rush after them, and hear a bell ring up-stairs and a door open and shut."

"That makes it all clear."

"So it seemed to me. I can tell you, Herr Wellner, I was thunder-struck — I stood helpless; and then when I thought to myself that this was the scoundrel's house, that he had taken her with him, and she had consented — Heaven and Hell! I turned quite sick. I had to lean against the wall, or I should have tumbled down like a felled ox.

But presently I came round, and then I found that matters were not quite so desperate. I looked at the door, and still half dizzy, I read: 'Marianne, Widow Tharow!'"

"Tharow?"

"Yes — Widow Tharow. Well, thank God, said I to myself, there is some one living here besides the man himself; but presently another idea struck me: the old ape looks like a bachelor — perhaps he lodges with this Widow Tharow. And then it would come to the same thing . . . ."

"No, no; you are mistaken," interrupted Otto. "I know your man. He is married and lives in the Heiligenthurmstrasse."

"What, you know him personally? Thank God for that!— But where and how?"

"I have met him at Herr von Düren's."

"Indeed! And what is his name?"

"Sunthelm. Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe."

"A nobleman — a man rolling in gold! And such an old scoundrel!— It is impossible — Fräulein Jakoby must be making a fool of him.— Sunthelm; well, I am glad to know his name at any rate.— I will make you stare yet, Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm!"

"Do not be rash."

"Never fear. I will only tell him, in a friendly way — and if he does not clear out of the way, but still carries on his bedevilments . . . ."

"What then ?"

"Why, I will break every bone in his body !"

"I advise you not," said Otto. "And what was the end of your adventure."

"That was about the end of it. I stood on the stairs a few minutes thinking, and wishing I only knew what kind of woman this Widow Tharow might be. A maid-servant came up the stairs, so I put on an air and the girl was civil enough, and I found out that this Tharow is a woman of good means, living at her ease and seeing a good deal of company, and a jolly kind of company too it would seem — acting, and dancing and champagne suppers — what more would you have ? Officers too, it seems, are plenty at Widow Tharow's, only they don't come in uniform.— She had plenty to say for herself; but as she had only been in the place a week or two she knew no details; however, it was a comfort to hear that Frau Tharow did not let lodgings . . . ."

A loud knock at the door interrupted the narrative and Doctor Salomon came in; Pröhle stammered out an apology, and retired.

"Well?" said Salomon shaking hands with his young friend: "Are you ready?"

"Quite. But it is much too early."

"Early? There is no such thing as too early on these occasions. Take my word for it, the greatest mistake a man can make when he is going to fight a duel, is to be later in the field than his adversary. It gives the other a moral superiority. He has had the advantage of studying the ground and the neighborhood, without the fatal sense of having a man opposite to him who is watching every movement and studying his face. He has had time to collect himself, and bring all his nerves to the sticking point. The other has lost the chance. The man who is on the ground first is at home; the second is a stranger; he is not at his ease, and in most cases comes off worst. Well! enough of that. The carriage is at the door; if you have nothing particular to do . . . ."

"Nothing," said Otto buttoning up his overcoat. "But stay — may I ask you to do me a favor?"

"You have only to speak."

Otto took out a key and opened the top drawer of his wardrobe.

"Here," he said, pointing to the yellowish

packet, which lay in front among a heap of papers and notes, "that wrapper contains a mysterious will made by my deceased father — I cannot now stop to explain the contents.— No one here but Roderich Lund knows of its existence; he came in one evening when I was copying the instructions on the envelope to send to my friend and master, Heinzius, at Halldorf, and so it happened that I told him about it . . . . This packet I earnestly entreat you, Herr Professor, in the event of my death, to burn immediately, unopened. I believe that I shall thus carry out my father's intentions, and that is my first object, even though I do not understand his reasons."

"I regard your instructions merely as an act of superfluous forethought," said Salomon. "However, if you wish to proceed with legal accuracy, you will give me your commission in writing. A few lines, left in the same drawer and designated as your last Will, is sufficient."

"You are right," said Otto.

He took a sheet of note paper and wrote a few hasty lines. Just as he had folded it and put it in an envelope, a piercing cry rang through the passage with a loud noise of thumping and crashing. Otto, who had his hat on, rushed out, followed by the professor.

In front of a large oak cupboard in the further corner of the landing, Frau Lersner was lying senseless on the floor. Some boxes and cases which had stood on the top of it for years had been shaken by the opening of the heavy door; the two top ones had come tumbling down — and the catastrophe was evident.

Wellner and Salomon tried to lift the unconscious woman. In a few minutes they were joined by Emma, as pale as death but quite collected; she lost no time in useless lamentations, but acted with prompt decision. Pröhle was sent off to fetch a doctor; then, with the help of Otto and the professor, she laid her mother on the old sofa in the sitting-room. She felt her head with a trembling hand; there was no external injury, the thick plait of her back hair must have served as a protection; but her rigid unconsciousness was all the more alarming.

Salomon tried to comfort and encourage the agitated girl. Otto leaned in silence against the window bar.

In about five minutes Pröhle came rushing up the stairs: "He is coming!" he said, out of breath.

"Herr Pröhle," said Otto, looking at his watch, "I have an appointment that cannot be

put off. May I count positively on your remaining at your post? I mean on your not leaving Fräulein Emma alone for an instant? Where are Roderich and Fräulein Jakoby?"

Pröhle solemnly promised that he would stay with Emma. Roderich was still sound asleep; Adele was gone to the shop — but Otto need not be uneasy.

"Very good," said Otto, turning to Salomon. "Then we will be off." He went, still speechless, up to Emma Lersner, and pressed her hand.

A stir was making itself heard in Lund's room, so Otto and Salomon hurried off, fearing that the poet's advent might lead to further delay.

"It is five minutes to ten," observed Otto as the carriage drove off. "We shall not be the first on the ground now, that is quite certain; and by your theory of duelling I am condemned to death."

"Pooh!" growled the philosopher, "you go into extremes. Besides — that clock says a minute past ten; make haste, coachman. Punctuality is the virtue of others besides kings. Of course we have ample excuse — it is a sad business really; we must hope it may not prove serious . . . . A capital girl that Emma, so quiet, so full of presence of mind,— a perfect Spartan,— and with a sweet face too of her own, half Madonna, half Venus. . ."

"Do you think so?" said Otto absently. Suddenly he started forward.

"In all that confusion I forgot to lock my drawer and bring away the key. Coachman!"

"Why, you surely will not turn back?"

"Why not? A few minutes more or less cannot matter now. It would be too disastrous . . . ."

"But my dear fellow, who on earth is likely to go to your drawer? Only Lund knows anything about it, the others are all busy with Frau Lersner, and there is not another soul in the house."

"But yet . . . ."

"Do not be absurd.— Drive on coachman.— No, no, I positively will not hear of it! we should lose at least twenty minutes."

Otto gave way; but a painful misgiving oppressed his heart, like the anxiety of a mother who knows she has left her child uncared for.

The ground selected for the duel was a clearing in the rather extensive wood lying just beyond the last houses on the western side of the city, an unfrequented place. Otto and Salomon found all the others assembled, as they had foreseen. At a short distance Ewald's smart carriage was visible through the leafless brushwood, and

Ewald himself, as the two men came near, made a display of pulling out his watch. Salomon made their apologies and explained the reason of their unpunctuality; Eric von Tyllichau and Doctor Föhrenstedt replied in polite terms. Then Tyllichau took Salomon aside.

"Well?" he said, "How have you settled matters?"

"Nothing new. My friend Wellner is prepared to withdraw his observations as soon as his antagonist . . . ."

"Of that I am sorry to say there is no hope. I have said and done everything I could think of to mollify Herr Ewald's mood; in vain. He will only consent if Herr Wellner retracts first . . . ."

"But allow me.— All the laws of logic . . . ."

"They count for nothing in matters of sentiment," interrupted Tyllichau. "I admit that you are in your rights — but what is the good of that? Kurt Ewald seems to have taken it into his head to establish a precedent. He is an irreconcilable foe to the socialist movement, and he looks on this meeting as a judgment from Heaven . . . ."

"But it is absurd! Pistols, as the *ultima ratio* in a political difference! Wellner himself, it is true.— Well, enough of that. I still am of

opinion that, in accordance with our agreement, we ought to make a last effort."

"By all means — for form's sake. Will you speak to the umpire."

Otto had not stirred or spoken; with his arms folded across his breast, he stood studying his opponent with a dejected gaze. Ewald, about twenty paces off, was leaning against a beech-tree; the cold-blooded fixity of his impassive countenance stirred Otto's gall: Did this man think him so ridiculously incapable?

The umpire, Lieutenant Clairvaux, now came forward with Tyllichau and Salomon. He bowed with cool courtesy to the two principals; he explained that, after a further conference with the two seconds, he had convinced himself that this unfortunate affair might, even now, at the eleventh hour, be amicably arranged. As it was always most painful to a man of sensitive honor to be held the aggressor in a dispute, he and the seconds had agreed on a mode of compromise which, as he hoped, would obviate this difficulty. The two gentlemen should both at once express their regrets for what had passed by simultaneously answering "Yes" to a question framed to that effect and put to them by the umpire. It was perhaps not a very conventional proceeding, but it involved

no humiliation or evasion of the strict code of honor. Salomon addressed Wellner and Tyllichau went to Ewald to do their utmost to induce their acceptance of this suggestion. Otto, who had no mind to fight, would certainly have agreed at once but that he happened to catch sight of the bitterly ironical smile that came and went on Kurt Ewald's lips like a Will-o'-the-wisp over a bog; this smile drove him to frenzy.

"It is for the aggressor to make overtures of reconciliation," he said with a shrug, "and not the person aggrieved. I positively refuse to accede to Lieutenant Clairvaux's compromise."

"But you do not understand," said Salomon desperately. "Which is the aggressor and which the aggrieved? That is the whole question."

Kurt Ewald's voice interrupted the discussion: "Come, gentlemen, we are losing time," he said impatiently: "We have been waiting five and twenty minutes already, and with four degrees of frost that is not altogether pleasant. I must request the umpire to proceed to business."

Eric von Tyllichau retired. The weapons were produced, and the opponents took their stand at the usual distance of twenty paces apart. They were to fire three times. The umpire counted to

fifty. The two pistols went off precisely together and Otto dropped as if struck by lightning.

Ewald turned pale. His victim had fallen backwards on the frosted moss, his face bathed in a stream of blood. Föhrenstedt proceeded at once to examine his wound which was an ugly, gaping one. To the bystanders it looked as though the bullet had entered the forehead at the temple and was now lodged in the brain; the doctor however explained that no mischief was done beyond a slight fracture of the bone; the bullet had glanced off, and, by a singular irony of fate, the wound lay exactly below the scar which the young man owed to Peltzer's cowardly attack.

"You may be quite easy," said Föhrenstedt to Ewald, who came forward biting his lips. "A hair's breadth to the left and it would have been serious. As it is — there, he is opening his eyes already."

In such a bitter temperature, it was imperatively necessary to get Otto home as soon as possible.

"How are you feeling?" asked the surgeon when Wellner was safely seated in the carriage.

"Dizzy and confused. Everything seems turning round — I cannot see you."

"That will go off. Keep as quiet as possible,

and lean your head against the cushion. I will follow you at once."

Otto got home and was put to bed. The doctor examined him once more with the greatest care, removed the splinters of bone, and bound and plastered the wound.

"How are they getting on over the way?" asked Otto when all was done.

Pröhle, who was in the room, told him that the poor woman was still unconscious.

"The house seems fated to misfortune," said Föhrenstedt as he took his leave.

Salomon remained to make various little arrangements. He said a nurse must be procured; but Fräulein Emma said she would manage better without help; a stranger would only be in the way. She spoke with such decision and confidence, and her brown eyes were so clear and resolute, that Doctor Salomon yielded.

Otto was greatly exhausted; what he most needed was sleep. Emma's round, fresh face looked down on him through a mist — he fancied he saw Lucinda in the plain, dark dress of a workwoman.

Again he started up. "The key," he said fixing a vague gaze on Salomon. "Please—take

it out — take care of it. . . ." But he could say no more, fatigue was too much for him.

An hour later Doctor Salomon quitted the house in a state of extreme agitation. Before locking the drawer he had looked into it, and then had searched the room like a miser hunting for lost gold. . . . The sealed packet which Otto had so solemnly entrusted to him before they set out, had vanished and left not a trace.

CHAPTER XX.

EPHRAIM PELTZER meanwhile was sitting in a three-windowed room in the Oststrasse, which he had lately moved into, and was weighing his plunder — Otto Wellner's mysterious packet — between his finger and thumb. He had bolted himself in, and carefully stuffed up the key-holes of both the doors. He turned and twisted the object of his pleased contemplation, examined the stamp on the seal — a Gothic W —, sat awhile with his head on his hand, and then rose with the air of a man who has an all-important problem to solve.

He glanced round with conspicuous satisfaction at the vulgar luxury of his common lodging;

it was in fact a paradise by comparison with those to which Peltzer had hitherto been accustomed. The writing-bureau, of new shiny mahogany; the console with its looking-glass, between the two front windows; the gaudy lamp; the tightly-stuffed and utterly uncomfortable sofa, with its crochet-work cover; the abominable oil-prints on the flowered walls — all this seemed to the "retired" workman as splendid as the furniture of a palace. "Ephraim Peltzer, Agent;" was displayed in florid lithography on a card by the street-door; the workman was on the high-road to wealth and dignity! And the more Ephraim appreciated the "first-class apartment" let to him by a worthy tailoress, the more firmly was he resolved to do his utmost to secure the continuance of this beatific splendor.

If he were to go at once to the baron, and hand over the packet with its five seals, Anastasius would no doubt pay down the sum agreed upon — but then the golden stream which had brought him such good cheer would cease to flow, at any rate for the present. Peltzer waxed melancholy as he pondered whether he might not secure something more by threats of treachery; but he soon gave up the idea; for, in the first place, he was even more deeply implicated than

the baron, and in the second, unfortunately, Sunthelm was master of a very effectual countermine. The theft perpetrated by Ephraim Peltzer and witnessed by Anastasius von Sunthelm — the abstraction of that pocket-book in the pastry cook's shop — was a far graver offence, than the commission given by the baron for the removal of a packet which, as the superscription plainly declared, contained neither money nor anything worth money. — No ; the difficulty could not be escaped by those means. And yet, how much Peltzer wished he could see his way out of it ! The plot hatched by Brönner, the escaped convict, had its advantages ; but at best it was a precious ticklish job — and if it were to leak out that Peltzer had any hand in it, good-bye for a good many years to the beautiful Italian landscape over the sofa, to the gorgeous scene of " Parental love " blazing in crimson and gold, over the alcove, and to that magnificent mahogany bureau.

He went to the window. " A very respectable street !" he said to himself ; the long row of lodging-houses with their freshly-stuccoed fronts struck him as quite palatial. And it was wide and airy, the pavement was even, the plate-glass windows of the new beer-saloon were so bright, the brass sign-plate was like gold, and the barmaid, who at

this moment came out to the doorway in her dazzlingly-clean Sunday apron, was so blooming and buxom! It would be really better fun to trot boldly through the sunlit streets, arm in arm with this rosy damsel, for instance, than to steal and creep through the alleys of the Von Durens' garden with that suspicious jade Fanny — with the prospect, to be sure, of a splendid job at last, but never for an instant secure against discovery.

He again took up the packet and read the mysterious words on the cover. He had always thought that the price that the baron was prepared to pay was monstrous, if his only object was to satisfy his curiosity, however eager it might be. But now he could not help asking himself what the contents of this queer parcel could possibly have to do with the love-affair of which the baron had constantly spoken. He thought and wondered, and devised a hundred possibilities; and by degrees systematically convinced himself of what he had long suspected: that the baron had told him a lie. At the same instant the thought flashed through his brain: "Undo the seal and find out, once for all, a thing you can never guess."

The baron had made it a strict condition that the packet was to be delivered to him untouched; but there would be no difficulty in refastening it

so as to defy detection — Brönner was sure to be up to such dodges. But, as he looked again at the seals, he thought better of it; he could do the job himself without that swindler's help. He had plenty of time; it was all the same whether the baron got the packet to-day or to-morrow.

He thought the matter over. Presently he took out a note-book and copied the shape of the W on the seal; seals with just such initials were to be bought at any stationer's — and though Roderich Lund, under the demoralizing influence of strong Johannisberger, had gratified the "psychological curiosity" of Baron von Sunthelm by giving him a minute description of this interesting document, words were not to be relied on in the matter of seals. These very seals, indeed, might be removed by means of a knife and replaced without any possibility of discovery. It was different to opening a gummed wrapper; there was always a risk of tearing it. And if the worst came to the worst, Ephraim Peltzer felt sure that he could copy the writing on the paper so perfectly that it would pass for the original. It was not for nothing that he had spent several months in a lawyer's office; his writing was wonderfully skilful — and after all, if Herr von Sunthelm ever discov-

ered the trick, he would hardly be in a position to punish him for it.

If the packet really contained an important secret — and the longer Peltzer thought of it the more likely this seemed — Baron von Sunthelm should henceforth be his milch-cow! If his worthy patron thought it desirable that the matter should lie buried in the heart of his accomplice, he would have to dip deep into his purse and hand over a nice little capital — enough to enable him to live a comfortable life, free from care or fears. The conviction that he was on the right scent became so strong that he was within an ace of simply tearing the wrapper open. However, it was just possible that he might be mistaken!

He locked the packet into the splendid bureau, put on his hat, and hurried out. In twenty minutes he was back again; he had found what he needed. After again bolting the doors he laid his materials out on the table — a seal, a new penknife, a stick of sealing-wax, a paper-knife and a few large envelopes; then he took out the packet and set to work.

His hands trembled as he raised the first seal; the wax was common, brittle stuff, easily removed, and in a few minutes he had got the packet open without injuring the wrapper. The envelope within was closely gummed down and more diffi-

cult to deal with; however, after much patience, Peltzer succeeded in this also. It was with sparkling eyes that he saw six or eight letters, each in its own envelope, enclosed in the outer one. The first was from Gottfried George Franz Wellner to his son Otto. This document, on the very first page, revealed the amazing facts of which the remaining papers contained the proof, while, at the same time, they supplied such information as would suffice, without any further clue, for obtaining its ample confirmation. In the course of this letter the elder Wellner gave the reasons which had prompted him to keep this important secret from the young man; and his arguments were so sound, so full of wisdom and noble, manly feeling, that even Peltzer, in the first flush of satisfaction over his discovery, was conscious of a sentiment of envious respect.

The remaining letters were for the most part written by one Adolar Thiemssen, from various towns in North America. The earliest was dated in the autumn of three years back. Two persons, then still living, were mentioned as witnesses, in case of need, to the truth of the statements it contained: first, the widow of a former servant of Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm: one Anna Theresa Molbeck; and secondly, a certain Frau

Tharow, who would beyond a doubt have turned her knowledge to account long since for the extraction of money, but that in past years the baron had been her lover, and she now found his influential protection necessary to shelter her from the investigations of certain censors of morals, who might have taken exception to the mode of life of the above-mentioned Widow Tharow. Herr von Sunthelm, however, had no suspicion — this was expressly noted — that Frau Tharow knew anything of the matter, for it was by a mere accident that she had been in the brick house, by the Sand-gate, at the time when the baron and Adolar Thiemssen were concluding their bargain in a front room. There was also a document in the baron's hand, so cautiously worded as to appear quite irrelevant, but of the greatest importance when read in connection with the rest.

For at least two hours Peltzer studied this precious treasure-trove. He read every line over and over, and the longer he read the more triumphant was his expression. At last he sprang up; he rushed about the room like a madman, fighting the air with his fists. He thumped the table, he bellowed with delight. In sheer excitement he swept all the things he had bought, on to the floor; the sealing-wax broke and the seal rolled

under the sofa . . . he did not want them! he had the baron under his thumb.

When he had spent his frenzy of joy he pressed the knob of the electric bell — an article which afforded him no less satisfaction than the mahogany bureau — and desired the landlady to bring him some writing-paper; then he copied all the documents, word for word. He kept the originals of one of Thiemssen's letters and of the baron's note; the rest he packed up again and carefully gummed down the envelope. Then he picked up the wax and the seal — now that he was certain of his game he was tempted to play his victim; the baron should, for the present, be allowed to believe that the wrapper and its contents were intact.

He set out on his errand at once. Anastasius von Sunthelm received him with well-affected indifference.

"Aha!" he said, "you have brought me the much-talked-of packet of curiosities. Well, I am really not sorry to have it, for I have the keenest suspicions .... However, that cannot matter to you. Here, these bank-notes settle your claims, and now all I ask of you . . ." and he laid his finger on his lips.

"I understand," said Peltzer coolly folding up the notes.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the baron, feeling the

necessity of making his fiction look more probable, "I really cannot blame the women if they look on some of their husband's escapades with other eyes than those of an unprejudiced man of the world. However — every one to his taste. A man of rank likes to pluck these living blossoms — it has been the way of the fashionable world from all time. On the surface of course we must obey the rules of morality and keep our innocent little passions as dark as possible, but as to giving them up! that is too much to expect. — Well now, once for all, the matter is dead and buried."

"Dead and buried," replied Peltzer in a choked voice. He trembled to think of the effect of the words which were burning the tip of his tongue. It occurred to him that in his sudden fury the baron might seize the gleaming Damascus blade which formed the centre of an elegant trophy on the wall over his writing-table — or might bring a revolver out of his breast-pocket and shoot his accuser dead on the spot. In fact there could be no doubt that Anastasius, to carry through the business so far as this, must be a man of prompt resolve, a criminal prepared at all hazards for the worst, and afraid of no man living.

After some hesitation, however, Peltzer dared to go on.

"Dead and buried!" he had said; and he added: "If every one can hold their tongue as faithfully as I. But if the woman Molbeck, your servant's widow for instance. . . ."

Anastasius turned as pale as ashes. He rose slowly and said in a hoarse voice: "What do you mean by that?"

"I only mean," said Peltzer smiling — for to see the self-contained man of the world lose his presence of mind was an infinite satisfaction — "that Molbeck, on his death-bed. . . ."

"Hush!" interrupted the baron husky with terror. "Come closer. How do you know. . . ."

"What?"

"That . . . that. — How did you know my servant?"

"Molbeck? I never knew him."

"But his widow . . . What has that whining hypocrite told you? I neglected Molbeck, it is true, was unjust to him perhaps. . . ."

"On the contrary, you paid him splendidly."

"Who says so?"

"Well, there are certain sources. . . ."

Long ere this Von Sunthelm had regretted his lack of self-command and had quite recovered himself. His heart quaked, it is true, at this plain

hint; but he stood firm and without blenching, leaning on the back of his chair.

"Your sources are muddy ones it would seem," he said with distant politeness. "I can only regret having allowed myself to give way to anger; when I parted with Molbeck I had very good reasons for doing so; and I ought to be perfectly indifferent to his widow's low attempts to gratify her revenge by mean insinuations."

"I can only repeat that you never neglected Molbeck, on the contrary, that you petted and bribed him; and his wife, when she found out. . ."

Anastasius drew back a step; he reached a bottle of water and poured out a tumblerfull. It was clear that this rascal Peltzer knew everything and had every intention of turning his knowledge to his own advantage.

While the baron slowly gulped the cooling draught, he took stock of the position with the swift intuition of despair. The worst possibilities, the terrors which some few years since had haunted his imagination, were now a thing of the past; his deed had grown old. But what would it avail him to feel secure from the vengeance of the law and a disgraceful penalty. His whole existence would none the less be ruined if his misdeed came to light — utterly ruined, on all sides.

It was not merely his actual daily life in the centre of the gay town, society which he loved, which was the very element he breathed in; the possession of his two millions* was at stake. And with the money he worshipped all must go that he so keenly enjoyed, all the sunshine of a fashionable and luxurious existence — the easy pillows, the costly furniture, the Lucullus-like banquets, the champing thorough-breds. By a very simple process those millions would become the property of the man he hated, of that Otto — Wellner as he was called — who had the advantage over Anastasius inasmuch as he was young, and who would live and die quite contented with what the world had to give him — for he knew no better! He did not guess what Fate — or, to be accurate, the baron's villainy — had withheld from him.

The baron's aversion for Otto suddenly flamed up into passionate fury; for there is no one so odious to a guilty man as the victim of his crime. During the two or three minutes, while he stood drinking by the little bronze side-table, a hundred schemes flashed through his brain. The first and most obvious was to buy Peltzer's silence with a handful of gold. But if the rascal were to put too high a price on it? From all he had seen of him

* 2,000,000 thalers, about 1,500,000 dollars = £300,000.

hitherto the baron might be prepared for anything.— In that case the extortionate scoundrel must be silenced by other means . . . . something would suggest itself.— Then as to the Widow, who, as it seemed, had proved treacherous in spite of her husband's dying injunctions . . . . Then, if at last Otto should hear of it . . . . these were fearful odds!

In this desperate crisis the baron wielded sword and dagger, brewed poisons, hired bandits and assassins. Rather than wait for the catastrophe which would fling him from the eminence of a fashionable position, and slur the ancient arms of Von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe with an indelible stain, he would fly to extreme measures; rather should a fresh and more terrible crime blot out the old one.

He turned on Peltzer with a sudden flash of decision:

"Did you open this packet?" he asked with a scowl.

"And if I did?"

"You would be a mean scoundrel, returning base ingratitude for all my generosity and kindness!"

Peltzer laughed.

"Generosity, kindness!" he repeated ironi-

cally. "What fine names you gentle folks hit upon!"

"Have done with this nonsense. Tell me, in so many words: What sum do you pretend to claim?"

"There is no hurry about that," said Peltzer with a grin. "I will settle that another time."

"No, I like to be quit of such matters. Name your price."

"Well then, say twelve thousand marks." * The baron drew breath; he had expected a larger figure, and Peltzer's modesty almost made him hope that, after all, his knowledge was not so fatally compromising as he represented. The baron made no reply; he took up the fateful packet and broke the seals. He pretended to be agreeably surprised as he glanced through its contents; but the pallor which crept over his haggard features gave the lie to this mockery.

"Very good," he said. "I will agree to your extortionate demand — on one condition." Peltzer's spirit leaped within him; he had not hoped for such an easy triumph.

"Thank you," he said very civilly. "Name your conditions."

The baron met his glance with a terrible eye.

* About 3,000 dollars.

"You must swear that you will never make any further demands on my purse; — also that you will aid and abet me in — in smothering all enquiries. If you do what I require in this particular I will freely and amply reward your services."

"What are the services?" asked Ephraim with a twinkle in his eye.

"That you shall know when the time comes. For the present — swear . . . .!"

Peltzer put his hands in his pockets and shrugged his shoulders.

"Herr Baron," he said with his head on one side: "What is the use of swearing . . . between you and me?"

The color flew into the baron's face.

"Very well," he said, with a tight pinch of his aristocratic lips. "Then listen to me. Instead of swearing — which would not bind you — listen to my final and fixed determination: Before I let a rascal like you squeeze me like a sponge . . . ."

"Who talks of squeezing you?" began Ephraim with a cunning grin. "You little know me, Herr Baron. Twelve thousand marks are a mere flea-bite out of your enormous income—but I am a civil, reasonable sort of chap and do not want

to grab everything for myself. Well, it is settled — when and where can I get the money?"

"Here, on Tuesday next, between one and two."

Peltzer made a clumsy bow and saying, with insolent familiarity: "Till we meet again," left the room.

"A d——d impudent rogue!" sighed the baron. "He thinks he has me in his power; he means to fleece me, to squeeze the very breath out of me! Was I mad or what infernal dotage made me employ him of all men? If only I had gone myself instead . . . . But he had better mind what he is about! If he goes too far, if I find that I am in any real and pressing danger — I can still find ways and means . . . and it will be his own doing.

CHAPTER XXI.

On the following Tuesday, at the appointed hour, Peltzer received the twelve thousand marks, as agreed, from Baron von Sunthelm. The sight of the bank-notes with the three large O's nearly turned his brain; the possession of such documents was something so new, so incredible. He

changed one of the dozen at the first money-changers, and sewed the eleven others, as soon as he got home, into the lining of his coat.

Having done this he made his way to the milk and coffee shop kept by the pawnbroker in the Fabriciusstrasse. Here he found Brönner just as before, sitting stolidly boozy over his glass of spirits. A smoky kitchen lamp stood on the table, for daylight could hardly find its way in through the dingy pane of glass over the door. Brönner seemed to have been reading, till tedium and lethargy had been too much for him and had given his features an almost deathlike look. The man's whole appearance had changed for the worse rather than for the better. He wore the same ragged clothes, and had made no closer acquaintance with soap and water.

"What? to-day again?" he said lifting his head.

"Yes, sure enough," said Peltzer. "I have come to tell you that I will have nothing to do with it."

"Are you gone mad?"

"By no means. But I see my way clear to making as much money as I care for by safe and respectable means, and I should be no better than a fool to risk my neck in a wild-goose chase."

"But why the devil did you never think of this before?"

"What a stupid question! Because I could not know beforehand . . . ."

"And what is to become of me? The money you are swindling somebody out of will not float me over the dam I suppose?"

"Swindling?"

"Well, money does not generally fall from the clouds."

"You are talking nonsense," said Peltzer disdainfully.

"Or have you come into a fortune?"

"I can earn as much as I want, and that's enough. In point of fact I never was in earnest about the other job. I only thought — when time hangs heavy a man gets queer notions . . . ."

Brönner laughed viciously.

"Holy innocent!" he said sarcastically. "Do you know, Peltzer, that you are behaving like a sneak? Here I sit waiting and shall rot before long in this musty hole; and when things are getting pretty for'ard you shuffle out of it. It is deuced mean, Peltzer, and what no man of honor will submit to!"

"Honor! Do you talk of honor, you thief among thieves!"

"That has nothing to do with it. I do not care for honor in the lawyer's sense of the word — and yet I can keep my word to a friend or a pal. Besides, I thought you were in love with the baggage."

Peltzer shook his head.

"There are plenty more — and prettier ones too. And what is more, you may give them a kiss without feeling as nervous as a dog robbing a larder."

"It is a devilish hard case," groaned Brönner clutching his hair.

"I tell you what!" said Peltzer suddenly, after a pause. "If you are so set on this job, do it by yourself!"

"Absurd!"

"Not at all. The girl, you see, cares quite as much for money as for a follower. If you clean yourself up a bit you are not half a bad-looking fellow. This evening at ten she expects me — here is her note, left at the post-office to be called for — I gave my name as Lehmann. Well then, do you go instead of me, and say that your friend Lehmann has gone abroad, suddenly, and is never coming back."

"And do you believe that she will swallow that?"

"Of course she will. If you set to work the right way the deuce is in it if, by the third time you see her, you are not as much in it as I am now. And I will write to her — in a false hand, of course,— and tell her she ought to have been kind to me, or that the whole thing is hopeless — or however I may be able to put it."

"Aye, but then I shall have to go out several times, and I shall run the risk . . . ."

"You can go a dozen times," said Peltzer. "Your hair has grown, and you do not suppose that every policeman carries a telescope to watch one wretched runaway. They have something else to do."

"That may be — but what next?"

"Why, man, have you lost your wits? Next you must do whatever turns up!— Understand me clearly; it is no part of my plans to egg you on — but if you act on your own account it will be all the same to me; I will tell no tales."

"I should think not indeed!"

"Why?"

"Because you would be up to your ears in the mud too."

"You noodle! Why you know more of the law than that! If I were to blab — turn king's

evidence! No, my good friend—though it would be quite in your style!"

The escaped convict sat brooding sulkily.

"I will think it over," he said at length. "Meanwhile if you have such splendid prospects you might lend me a little to go on with. I will pay you when I am next in funds. Well, you need not make such a sour face over it. I am not such a sneak as to cheat a pal on purpose."

"Just listen to me," said Peltzer crossly. "I am sick of your everlasting clack about being 'pals.' There is not a man in the world who can say anything against me, and that is more than you can boast."

"Oh! very well; I will call you my Lord, Count if you like. Heaven and earth! you must indeed be browsing in clover. So much the better for me. Just hand me over a snug little sum; the twenty marks all went in the clothes that the landlord found me."

"Where are the clothes?"

"Up-stairs. The rags I have got on are almost too bad even for this beastly hole. But now—if I really go in for courting the little witch, and I do not say I wont—I must have something to wear, and something rather better than a shabby blouse. Send me two hundred marks

and if I let out your real name you may call me a dirty sneak."

"Say: May I perish . . . ."

"May I perish if ever I break my word!"

"Very good. Here are the two hundred marks. And now do the best you can for yourself. Only mind, I am out of it, once for all."

"All right," said the other, slipping the money into his pocket. Peltzer went away.

"I wish I was fairly rid of that fellow," he said to himself, as he went down the street. "I have not felt so comfortable and easy for many a long day. I could find it in my heart to be sorry for Fanny;—but it cannot be helped. When a man is not forced to turn knave the saying that 'honesty is the best policy' is not a bad one after all." And proud in the consciousness of a high moral tone, Peltzer made his way home.

An hour later, when it was quite dark, Brönner stole out of a side door. A large-crowned cap with a leather peak covered his brown curly hair, and his russet beard, instead of sticking out in coarse tangles round his chin, was carefully combed. He stole along a narrow unpaved alley that ran, parallel to the Fabriciusstrasse, to the remotest part of the suburb. It took him some little time to get over the alarm he felt at the

sight of human faces. He fancied that each one stared at him suspiciously, and that he was recognized at least three times in a minute, though he had hardly ever walked through this part of the town before. To appear as innocent and unconcerned as possible he whistled now and then the tune of some street song. A pang came over him as, at the corner of one of the cross streets, he spied the helmet of a policeman. It was all he could do to control himself, and not to take to his heels on the spot. But by degrees he got used to the sense of danger. The policeman had walked past him at a deliberate pace, and had not even looked round at the trembling wretch who, in fancy, already felt the grip of the law on his collar. His long seclusion and the excitement of his escape had put him into a state of nervous distress which must have its course, and this aimless wandering through the less-frequented streets was a sort of soothing treatment, a preparatory course, to qualify the criminal for a sterner ordeal.

While this shameless bargain between Peltzer and Brönner was being transacted behind her back, the abandoned little hussy who had so recklessly betrayed the confidence of her master's family was thinking of nothing but her lover — the man she was really and passionately devoted to, and

for whose pleasure she had laid a trap for Peltzer's conceit. This lover was no less a person than the notorious agitator Leopold Meynert. It was he who had come to meet her in the palm-house on the evening of Camilla's betrothal. With him she intended, sooner or later, to fly beyond the seas, and to sell herself, body and soul, to the man she adored. The fact that he would leave a wife and family to starve made no difference to Fanny. In her pretty empty head, from the time her eyes first saw light, one sole idea had held sway: enjoyment — pleasure — to be happy in her own way. Thousands might perish for aught she cared, so long as she could laugh, and deck herself with finery and jewels, above all if she only had Him to pet and fondle her; this was to her the acme of all dreamed-of joy.

The creature was a repulsive mixture of good and evil — but baseness and meanness gave the prevailing tone. If she had been born under the radiance of an absolute sovereign — at Versailles, for instance, in the seventeenth century — she might have brought a nation to ruin; as it was she could only wreck the happiness of a family.

Long before Peltzer had come within her ken with his suggestive hints, the idea of taking some of the wealth of the household with her on her

journey to El Dorado, had entered her head. She had instinctively guessed what her new lover would be at, and the project had flashed upon her of making the man her tool, and then cheating and beguiling him of the fruits of his crime. Peltzer should effect the robbery and give her the plunder to take care of; then, long before that slow, clumsy dolt had discovered the trick, she would be off and away with Leopold Meynert.

She had reckoned it all closely, and worked it out to a nicety. She would ask for a holiday the day before, to go home to a friend's wedding; then, if Peltzer were successful in the robbery, she would be beyond suspicion and have ample time to make off.

Leopold Meynert meanwhile was not idle. He had procured passports; he had devised an excuse for a longer absence from Oberhorchheim without extending his propagandist tour — which would of course be watched and commented on in the papers.

All that now remained was to fix the day and hour, and two things had to be considered. In the first place, Meynert was quite as much bent on an easy and comfortable future as Fanny, and he had made up his mind that the cash-box of the Association should form part of his luggage. He had

confided this scheme to Fanny and had explained to her that he could not stir till the contents of the said cash-box, which had sunk to a low ebb, should have swelled to high-tide again. There was, happily, an immediate prospect of this favorable reaction. The coming elections had fanned party spirit to a white heat, and subscriptions and donations were flowing in. If this continued, he would have a considerable sum in hand by the middle of December — and then away — away with smiling Fanny and smiling Mammon to the realms of undisturbed enjoyment.

This very evening at eight — two hours before her meeting with Peltzer, represented by Brönner— Meynert was to join Fanny in the shrubbery behind the Von Dürens' house and, if possible, fix the day and hour for her flight; then, at ten, Fanny could name a suitable hour for her pseudo-lover's burglary. This, in fact, was the reason why she had written to make the appointment with Peltzer, *alias* Lehmann.

She was counting the minutes with eager anxiety. So utterly absent-minded was she, in her passion for her criminal lover, that she forgot to put on her wonted smile when Herr von Tyllichau, meeting her in the ante-room, chucked her rosy chin. She did not even pay any attention to

the conversation in the drawing-room, though the door was ajar, and, as a rule, she could not help listening. She wandered about among the flowers and stands of plants in dreamy absence of mind, till a merry laugh from Camilla roused her from this absorbed oppression.

They were discussing Camilla's wedding. Fanny heard her young mistress exclaim in rapturous tones: "Then it is really fixed for the fifteenth!"

The listener pricked up her ears with a faint, ironical smile: the bridegroom, who only a few minutes since had left the tokens of his admiration on the little waiting-maid's rosy cheeks, responded to Camilla's ecstasies in a few graceful and ornate phrases that might have been borrowed from some young lady's novel. But suddenly the conversation had become interesting: there could be no doubt in Fanny's mind that the fifteenth of December would be the day, and nothing could suit her schemes more admirably.

Originally the third of March, as being Camilla's birthday, had been named for the wedding; but Herr von Tyllichau had pressed for an earlier date, not merely for the satisfaction of his impatient heart, but on practical grounds, explaining that it was necessary that he should go early in

February to inspect in person one of the estates which he managed with such admirable skill. It was, he knew, asking a great sacrifice of his Camilla, as she would have to spend Christmas, for the first time, away from her parents and friends; but he hoped that she might soon forget her homesickness on the *Riva degli Schiavoni* where they would go for their honeymoon. . . .

"Homesickness!" exclaimed Camilla. "How can I be homesick when I am married?"

Thus, half in earnest and half in jest, the talk lasted some time. Fanny cogitated on the results of this information and found them entirely satisfactory. This wedding, in fact, seemed arranged on purpose to facilitate the execution of the scheme that she had hatched with Peltzer. On such occasions the whole household were occupied in the front rooms; there was a general bustle and stir which absorbed every body's attention; and any exceptional incident, which at other times might excite remark, would pass unnoticed.

It was settled in short; unless anything unforeseen should interfere, the fifteenth of December must be the decisive day.

Punctually at eight Meynert was at the garden gate. Fanny let him in, and with her finger on her lips led him to a thick clump of shrubs not

far from the entrance. The leafless arms of the Virginia creeper rustled inhospitably in the cold night-wind, and a damp, earthy smell filled the air. The lovers felt nothing of the autumnal desolation; they clung together in a passionate embrace and kissed like Hero and Leander after the battle with the waves. This Leander too — though he had little else in common with his classical prototype — had flung himself into the stormy waters of dishonor and unfaith; he had yielded to the seductions of woman — for, in fact, it was not till he had met Fanny, not till this wily little Siren had falsified his heart and judgment, that the thought of such a crime had ever occurred to him. Fanny's smile had poisoned the very sources of good in him, all that was wholesome or manly: his feeling for the faithful partner of his life, his love for his parents, his sense of self-respect and honor. Her blandishments and greed for luxury had degraded the weak, vain, susceptible man, whose eloquence only wore the semblance of strength of purpose, to the level of a common criminal.—His wife—his betrayed wife—prompted by an uncle, had made him a speechifying agitator; and a convent-bred innocent might have made him a pietist; or a well-born heiress might have made him a bigoted conservative!

At nine he and Fanny parted. Everything fitted, everything was concerted, down to the minutest detail.

Fanny ran back into the house; Holtmann was just taking in the tea and she would be wanted no more for the present. She paused as she passed the drawing-room door, and heard her master comment in the severest terms on the dispute between Ewald and Otto Wellner; Doctor Wolf, and still more Doctor Lehrbach, eagerly defended Wellner's conduct in the affair, and finally Lucinda expressed herself with much decision as opposed to her father's stern judgment in the case.

As she heard Frau Lehrbach's warm defense a look of sly intelligence dawned on Fanny's face, which, being interpreted, meant: "Aha! So you are sweet on the young man! I understand!" Then she flew up to her room, and on the back of a torn play-bill scribbled the rough copy of a note which her aunt — a stupid old body, completely under her niece's thumb — was to write and send by post, to Fräulein Fanny Labitsky, at his Excellency Herr von Düren's.

This epistle, not altogether free from mistakes in spelling, ran as follows:

"Dear Fanny: The hand of the Lord has fallen heavily on our earthly head. It has pleased

the Almighty to call your good uncle, my dearly beloved husband, to Himself, after a short illness. This morning, the 13th, at about seven o'clock, he closed his eyes in rest." Then followed a few sentences as to the widow's heartfelt grief, ending with a moving appeal to Fanny "not to leave her aunt alone in her sorrow, but to pay the last honors to the deceased, and to come to Bosenheim as soon as their excellencies, her master's ladies, could spare her."

By the time Fanny had sketched this letter it was nearly ten. She carefully put it by and went down-stairs again to ask Holtmann once more, with dutiful zeal, whether she was wanted for anything. Holtmann assured her that she was not, and then, as they stood behind the curtains over the door, gave her a stolen glass of Château d'Yquem. For this she saucily patted his cheek, and as she turned away, he too sighed: "Sweet little puss! If only I were twenty years younger!"

Brönner, with a beating heart, was standing at the gate of the Von Durens' garden; he walked up and down two or three times . . . punctually as the clock struck Fanny opened the gate.

At first she was startled, but Brönner spoke at once: "I have come from Lehmann." And then, as Fanny still hesitated, he added reassuringly:

"I know everything; Lehmann and me, it's all one. He has been obliged to go away suddenly, on a journey, and I have come in his place. We are partners — we go halves, Lehmann and me, unless you prefer to give him the go-by altogether."

Fanny, who had heard from Peltzer that he had a partner, was at once ready to accept the situation, and before long Brönner frankly confessed the fact that Lehmann had thrown up the job.

This at first somewhat alarmed the girl.

"Will he hold his tongue?" she said. "However, I must say . . . . a man who leaves me in the lurch without a word is not worth a minute's thought or regret. And after all — you are as good-looking as Lehmann at any rate!"

Brönner had not expected such an easy conquest and was intoxicated by his success. When he presently asked the girl whether she remembered him, and she answered with a ready lie: "of course I do;" and allowed him to put his arm round her waist, the possession of such a sweetheart filled almost as important a place in Brönner's fancy as the cash-box in Von Düren's library.

END OF VOL. I.

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